



THE FIRST TO CAST A STONE

*AN EPISODE OF FRONTIER LIFE
AND SOCIETY IN INDIA.*

BY "NEMO"

SECOND EDITION



BOMBAY

A. J. COMBRIDGE & CO.,
ESPLANADE ROAD & THE RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS,
VICTORIA TERMINUS & BYCULLA STATION

1892.

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CHAPTER I.

Going over to Mess—Colonel Fosbrooke and his daughter—Eva's engagement. Captain Carr goes home on six months' urgent private affairs—The fatal letter—The Khalsapore Post Office.

"Rot."

"Well you may call it what you like, but this morning's mail brought the news, and every one knows about it."

"And what is the general impression?"

"Something like what yours is; incredulous at first, and barely realizing the whole thing afterwards."

"But what a beastly shame; what on earth could have made Carr throw over Miss Fosbrooke?"

"God knows. A fresher face, or a bit of money, perhaps. Miss Fosbrooke has been in this country now some years, and the climate has taken it out of her somewhat; besides you know the Colonel is awfully dipped, and lets it be known plainly that not a sou goes with his daughter."

"I know that, my dear fellow; if it was not that Carr is doing a dishonorable part in leaving an engaged girl out here, then going home and marrying another, I should say he, with his extravagant tastes and ideas, was well out of it, for the Colonel as you say has not a penny to give. But Carr, does he come back to us?"

"Of course, he's on the strength of the Regiment and will be out shortly, his time's up soon. There goes the second bugle, step out."

The above conversation took place between two officers as they strolled over from their bungalow to the Mess House, a little way down the road. They both belong to a famous Irregular Cavalry corps, generally known as Carlton's Horse or Rissalah. At the time my story opens, the Regiment was lying at Khalsapore, a frontier station, accessible in those days by steamers plying on the river, a few miles off. A Railway was being built, but a long way from completion. The

headquarters and wing of a British Regiment and a Mountain Battery also garrisoned the place, which boasted moreover of a Church, a Chaplain, a Deputy Commissioner and a Reading Club. Colonel Fosbrooke's compound possessed a large swimming bath, the only one in the station, which during the hot weather (and the hot weather in those regions *is* awful) was much appreciated by all the residents who, through the Colonel's courtesy, had access thereto.

Colonel Fosbrooke is a widower with an only daughter. He is a distinguished old officer, and has seen a deal of frontier service. His wife died when she was at home with Eva, then a child, who fell to the care of a maiden aunt. This lady, besides giving her niece an excellent education, modelled her character on a sound moral basis. At twenty years of age Eva had joined her father out here. Three years later she attracted the attention and admiration of Captain George Carr of her father's Regiment, and in due course they became, to all intents and purposes, an engaged couple. All went well. The wedding day had been fixed and the usual preliminaries arranged. Suddenly, one morning, Captain Carr went over to his Colonel's house with an open letter in his hand; it came from his agents, urging on him the necessity of his speedy presence in England, to arrange some legal questions with regard to a property left him by a distant relative.

So he went.

Eva, who really loved him, mourned this separation, and looked forward with prayerful earnestness to her lover's return. He wrote to her from several points on the way, epistles though not very tender, quite enough to make Eva happy. As days wore on, however, his letters became fewer and further between. Colonel Fosbrooke resented this as negligence, but Eva, who believed in her lover, was ever ready with some excuse for him. Things were therefore in this state, when the news that Captain Carr had married in England came like a thunder-clap on the station, and great was the indignation expressed at the absent Lothario, and deep was the commiseration felt for the poor deserted girl in their midst.

"I am so sorry to hear the news, dear Miss Fosbrooke," Mrs. Molehampton had said that morning, coming in on our heroine after breakfast time. "I am sure Captain Carr has acted a most dishonourable part, and I am at a loss to account for it."

"How did you hear of it, Mrs. Molehampton?" asked Eva, looking up at her visitor with eyes red from weeping.

"We met your papa at the Post Office, dear, and he was in a terrible way about it. He made no secret of the news."

"I am sorry papa should have taken it to heart so," replied Eva, meekly. "On me falls the brunt. He left me vowing unalterable love, and I have been true to him in thought, word and deed. I pray God to give me strength to bear my cross," and here a fresh burst of weeping overtook her and she cried in silence.

Mrs. Molehampton, the Chaplain's wife, did her best to comfort the poor stricken girl and, promising to come in during the afternoon, she sped home.

That morning Colonel Fosbrooke formed one of the eager groups of exiles assembled at the Post Office awaiting the distribution of English letters. Among those handed to him was one, the superscription of which appeared in the well-known writing of his son-in-law to be, but addressed to him. Surprised that it was not directed to Eva as usual, he tore open the cover and learnt the fatal truth. Captain Carr plainly told him, he did not love his daughter sufficiently well to make her his wife. "I know what I am going to say will pain you," he wrote, "but it is no use struggling against fate. I feel I don't love your daughter sufficiently well to make sure our life together would be a happy one, and I hasten, on my part, to dissolve the contract and hope she will look at it in a sensible light and trouble herself no more about me. In fact she is too good for me. She is seriously inclined, and I am just the contrary. When with her, and dazzled by her beauty and many accomplishments, conviction did not come home to me that the great disparity of our ideas on religion, and so forth, would embitter our married life. Her rebukes made, no

doubt, in all gentleness and love, did not at the time strike me that coming from her as my wife, they would be unpalatable. Now, however, I see that all this would prove an endless source of differences between us. She is too good, and I fear I am too case-hardened. She would think it her mission to endeavour to turn me into a serious man, and this I would resist. Taking all in all therefore, I think I have decided for the best. I will not mince matters, so tell you I am bringing out my wife with me. All I beg of you is to think of me as charitably as possible, and of you and Miss Fosbrooke, I humbly ask forgiveness."

As Colonel Fosbrooke read, his brow darkened, then breaking into a strident laugh, "Hear this, ladies and gentlemen," he exclaimed, "let me give you a specimen of truth and honor such as is in vogue now-a-days," and he read aloud Carr's letter from end to end to his wondering and startled audience, while murmurs of disapprobation frequently interrupted him. This match had been so long looked on as a settled thing, and people had learnt to associate Captain Carr's name so naturally with that of Miss Fosbrooke, that this sudden blow to the union in prospectu took away their breath, and one and all were unanimous in condemning the absent man's conduct. Hastening home, Colonel Fosbrooke broke the news as gently as it lay in him to his poor deluded child. At first her storm of sorrow alarmed her father, but after a time tears came to her relief and he allowed her to weep on in silence. Thus was it that the whole of Khalsapore knew of poor Eva's cruel disappointment caused by her lover's perfidy, and every one denounced Carr's behaviour as heartless and dishonorable, and admitting of no palliation whatever. Henniker of the Irregulars first heard the news as is related at the opening of this chapter, told him by a brother officer named Fitzmaurice. The former had been out shooting for the day and had returned barely in time to dress for Mess, whither let us follow him and his chum.

CHAPTER II.

*The Carlton's Irregular Mess—Captain Trolly's ideas of women—
The sceptic on female honor and virtue—The guise of the
Tempter.*

"This is a nice piece of business Fitzmaurice has been just telling me of," said Henniker, sitting down next to a brother officer named Trollys.

"Oh, you mean l'affaire Carr?"

"Yes."

"What of it?"

"What of it! why I think it is a precious mean thing for Carr to do."

"My dear fellow," sneered Trollys, "don't fret yourself, such events happen every day. Miss Fosbrooke can easily console herself by transferring her affections to some one else."

"Why you talk as if the transfer of a young lady's heart from one man to another is as easy as endorsing a bill with another name or something of that sort, Trollys."

"So it is. Love and loyalty in woman has gone out with the march of civilization, all bunkum, don't you know?"

"No! I don't know, Trollys," answered Henniker, hotly, "and I should not like to hold your opinions on the subject."

"Quite right, Henniker," joined in Major Doyle, a bronzed officer sitting opposite. "Trollys, you are a deuced sight too sceptical as to feminine constancy, I know."

"I am sceptical, Major, and I only speak from experience."

"Then I advise you to keep your experiences to yourself; a too free airing of them will be likely to get you into trouble one of these days."

"Poor Miss Fosbrooke, I feel for her intensely," said Mr. Molehampton, the Chaplain, who was dining at the Cavalry Mess that night.

"Aye," assented Colonel Morton, the senior officer present, "'tis a shabby thing for Carr to do and I sympathize with the poor girl. Yet there's a deal of truth in what Carr says in his letter to Colonel Fosbrooke, don't you think so?"

"I don't think there is anything extenuating for Captain Carr's conduct," replied the Chaplain severely.

"Why, look here, Sir," said Morton, "you will admit the evil resulting from incompatibility of temper?"

"Certainly."

"And of tastes, inclinations, and so forth."

"Well to a certain extent, but I think in the case of man and wife one's individual ideas as regards likes and dislikes should be made to defer towards the common peace and happiness."

"Granted, but in this case, Carr is essentially what you call a worldly fellow, fond of playing high, seldom goes to Church, gets tight now and again and does not hesitate in using a big big d, don't you know?"—

"Whereas Miss Fosbrooke"

"Is, as we are all aware of, intensely good and religious," put in the Colonel. "All honor be to her for it, I say. In my eyes she's purity itself. I have known her from infancy. But in this purity, this goodness, lies the rub. Carr is afraid of her, and has cried off."

"Saved his bacon in fact," remarked Trollys, sneeringly, for the conversation between Colonel Morton and the Chaplain had commanded general attention. "Saved his bacon and married a more congenial spirit, I bet a few."

"What is your idea of a congenial spirit, pray Trollys," asked Major Doyle, leaning forward.

"Oh, a woman who won't be everlastingly stuffing religion down your throat, who won't object to your losing a few rupees now and again, who won't turn up her eyes if you swear a bit, a sort of stunner all round don't you know, girl with a good figure, who'll cut her dresses as low as you like, goes in for a cigarette and a peg occasionally."

"And think you this is Carr's bean ideal of a woman for his wife?"

"I know it is."

"Oh you do?"

"Yes, for I have often heard him say so and I wonder at

his ever having got entangled with Miss Fosbrooke who is just of the opposite type."

Silence, and Trollys absently played with his wine glass.

"I suppose the Colonel is too cut up about all this, which accounts for his absence this evening," remarked Fitzmaurice.

"Yes," replied Morton, "he wrote and told me so."

"No wonder. How does Miss Fosbrooke take it all," asked Henniker.

"With resignation," replied the Chaplain. "My wife has been with her for several hours to-day and found her very patient and uncomplaining."

"Poor girl," sighed Colonel Morton, "I feel for her indeed. God grant there be no such evil in store for my little one at home. Gentlemen, shall we adjourn?"

Captain Trollys is one of those unenviable mortals, who fully believes there is nothing good in this world or the next. Gifted by nature with attractions of a superior order, tall, well formed, handsome, possessing accomplishments above the common, an excellent singer, dancer and horseman, he seems to have borne to prosper and be happy. He is one of those cynics however who have no faith in God, no faith in woman. The former he looks on as something mythical, and the latter as an instrument only for man's pleasure and caprice. He has already been in several serious scrapes from which he managed to get extricated through the influence of his titled relatives, for be it known that Fred Trollys is the scion of a noble House and writes "Honorable" on his card. Honorable in name only, but not in nature. True, he is most punctilious in meeting his gaming debts, and is generous and open-handed to a fault. He has proved himself brave in the face of the enemy, as is testified by the medals on his breast; but beyond this, there is nothing noble in his nature. Woman, he considers his lawful prey. On the principle of everything being fair in love and war, Fred Trollys would hesitate at nothing, when woman, his legitimate game, was in view. He possesses an unenviable notoriety in this respect, and glories in being looked on as the terror of those husbands not quite sure of the moral stability of their wives.

He cares not for unmarried girls. His pursuit is confined to attractive matrons, women whose downfall doubly damns them by reason of the violation of their marriage vows. "I don't care for your insipid Misses," he would tell any one with tastes somewhat similar to his own. "They have no go in them. They affect to innocence and all that, while perhaps nine out of ten of them have no more pretensions to the attribute than I have. All this disgusts me the more, especially as there's just a chance of their really being virtuous, and then if they do get into a mess there's the devil to pay. Besides, should you begin to be attentive to a Miss, the old people commence to prick up their ears. If you are at all eligible, you are fawned on and sucked up to, and then comes the asking about your intentions, and so forth. Now with a nice crummy Matron it's different; she has nothing to lose if you do run foul of her, the after-consequences need not trouble you, provided you steer clear of the husband, and there are only a few of them who kick up a rumpus when the worst is discovered, the idiots don't you know who drag their grievances into the Divorce Court and let the whole world know how they've been sold."

Reader you come across such men now and again during life's pilgrimage. I have met only one, and on him do I build Trolly's character and career. Such men, thank God, are rare among our nation, and as long as they remain so we need fear no great evil, but allow the species to increase, permit the morals of the day to continue their present headlong course, then good-bye to peace and happiness in our homes. Flattery, an oiled tongue, a spurious worship, a handsome address and exterior go to make up the guise under which Satan approaches our women. Be they strong, well and good, the tempter will slink back abashed. Be they weak, are they not encased from head to foot in a panoply of stern virtue and rectitude, then farewell to honor, love and peace in this world, and the next.

CHAPTER III.

Some Khalsapore ladies—Womanly sympathy—The secret of Captain Carr's perfidy.

"Is your daughter visible, Colonel Fosbrooke" ? cried the foremost of three horsewomen, drawing rein under the portico the next morning, and espying the Colonel with his cheroot in a long arm-chair. "We would like to see her, poor girl."

The speaker is a tall handsome lady, in all the glory of full blown blonde womanhood, whose splendid figure shewed to the utmost advantage in her tight-fitting riding habit, making her present a series of beauty's curves in all their undulating and seductive variety. She is very handsome, has speaking blue eyes, and the wealth of her golden hair appears in a massive knot beneath the rim of her stylish helmet. She smiles as she addresses the Colonel, shewing thereby a row of perfect teeth which, though rather large, are beautifully white and even.

Colonel Fosbrooke hastens down the steps and assists the lady to dismount, a feat he barely achieves with success, for he is getting on in years and the Equestrienne is built like Juno. "So kind of you to come, Mrs. Dalrymple," he said, pausing before going to the assistance of the others. "And you both also," he added, after aiding Mrs. and Miss Cheyne off their horses.

"Drummond brought me the sad news yesterday, Colonel Fosbrooke. He went out early this morning to Chuptagullec, the Beloochees are again giving trouble. We," alluding to her companions, "met on the race course just now and thought poor Eva would require some comfort, so we rode in together to condole with her and ask for something to drink."

Eva, at this juncture appeared. The three ladies kissed her, she was very pale and sad, and Mrs. Dalrymple's handsome eyes filled with tears as she beheld the world of woe depicted on the poor unfortunate girl's face.

"My poor darling," exclaimed Mrs. Cheyne, equally moved, and straining Miss Fosbrooke to her breast, "what a

crying shame that he should use you so! You, who are so good, so gentle and would make him the best of wives."

"She is too good for him," ejaculated Mrs. Dalrymple, angrily, drying her eyes and seating Eva by her side on a sofa with her arm round her waist. "But, dear, don't cry, we came to comfort you, dry your tears, and let us talk over the matter quietly. How do you account for this sudden change on his part"?

"It did not take me altogether by surprise," faltered Eva, her head cushioned on Mrs. Dalrymple's exuberant bosom.

"How, dear"?

"Even before he left, he often told me he deemed himself unworthy of me, and somehow I had a sort of presentiment that something of this sort would happen sooner or later, but I told no one."

"Not even your papa"?

"No. Then his gradually leaving off writing prepared me for the worst, although I hoped on to the last, attributing the paucity of his letters to press of business and want of time to write."

"But he said nothing to you in his letters about breaking off the match, did he"?

"Absolutely nothing."

"The excuses he has given to your father are all humbug," said Mrs. Dalrymple.

"I fear I am in a measure to blame," said Eva, in a low voice.

"Why so, dear"? queried Mrs. Cheyne.

"You see, he says he is afraid we would not be happy together, that he is too worldly, and that I being seriously inclined, there would be disagreements on this score, if not on any other."

"Have you given him cause to think so, dear"? asked Mrs. Cheyne.

"I confess I have, but what would you have me do? When I saw the man I love going wrong, would you expect me to stand idly by, without making an effort to save him"?

The two elder ladies were silent. They thought of the struggles they had endured in their early married days, endeavouring to bring their husbands under their subjection, and how much happier their lives became when they gave up the contest, accepted honorable defeat, and bearing with their partners in all things, evoked from them forbearance in return, thus at last establishing themselves in honored places in their hearts even more beloved than when they, in their foolishness, eagerly clutched at the matrimonial ribbons and thought how to hold them to the end. Eva Fosbrooke's religious training taught her to consider it her duty to be ardently ready to snatch any brand, within her reach, from the burning. This man then, whom she loved, and who had asked her to be his wife, could more fit subject present itself? She knew he scoffed at religion, attended Divine worship once of a Sunday for mere matter of form. She was aware that night after night he would sit up with boon companions playing heavily and drinking deeply. More than once, on making a false stroke at Badminton or Lawn Tennis, or when riding with her, checking his refractory horse, had she heard him indulge in oaths, simple enough to the world in general, but savouring of awful profanity to her. Yet with all these faults he had made a lasting impression on her heart and she loved him seriously, devotedly. When therefore, in the course of time, he asked her to be his wife, she accepted him, in the joyful anticipation of being able to wean him from all his evil habits, and keep him thenceforth unspotted from the world. She was eagerly determined to shew him to God, and by prayer and supplication obtain his admission to that Fold, the Shepherd of which is our Saviour, even Christ. With this intent then, and full of her Heavenly Master's business, poor Eva, no sooner had she plighted her troth, took her Lover regularly in hand. Gently, lovingly had she pointed out to him the error of his ways. With her Bible open on her knees, would she refer from passage to passage, reading aloud blessed words of hope and comfort, telling him how far happier he would be, would they both be, if he would turn to Christ and know that his Redeemer lives. 'All this was gall and wormwood

to Carr. During the earlier days of their engagement, he would listen to her simply out of good nature, and the desire to please; but when he found that on every occasion of his going to the house, the Bible would be produced, it became irksome; so one day he plainly but kindly told her that he had no doubt she was a thorough angel and doing an angel's work, but that he got quite enough spiritual and ghostly advice once a week at the Church. "I dare say I am very bad, Eva, but I am too old now to go to school. By your own shewing you knew of my imperfections before you promised to be my wife. I tell you candidly, no amount of preaching will make me a bit better than I am. I will endeavour to make you a good husband, dear, but you must take me just as you find me. If you think I am too bad for you, you can easily recall your promise to me. I dare say when we are married, I shall stay more at home, play only on public nights, and drink a peg or two less. Then companionship with you may cure me of the habit of swearing now and again; but this everlasting taking to task and Bible reading must cease, Eva. We must be happy without it, don't you know. If, however, it is a *sine qua non* with you, we must say good-bye to each other and take separate paths through life."

After this, Eva never broached the subject again. She prayed for strength, she trusted to home influence and a wife's sweet prerogative to succeed yet with him, once he became her husband. But his words made her feel uncomfortable ever afterwards, and she had a presentiment that she was not as dear to him as he to her. Something now told her, too, that her zeal for his spiritual welfare had made him cool and that his attitude towards her had not that enraptured aspect it wore, before she accepted him. She kept all these fears tight locked within her own breast. Therefore, when the fatal letter came, she was, in a measure, prepared for its contents, but nevertheless her grief proved very severe, and sympathy such as that afforded by her lady friends was sweet to receive.

"In what way, dear?" asked Mrs. Dalrymple.

"I tried to point out wherein I thought he was wrong, supporting my arguments by quotations from the Bible. As my

promised husband I deemed I had a right to do so to him. I was hoping I had made some impression on him, till one day, a short time before he left, he told me that my preaching, as he called it, was distasteful to him, that I must take him as he is, and that if I thought very badly of him he would release me from my promise."

Mrs. Dalrymple and Mrs. Cheyne, both women of the world, exchanged meaning glances. *Here* was the cause, *here* was the reason of Carr's unfeeling conduct, but for which there existed not the shadow of justification. Here was a pure sweet girl, jilted, thrown over by a heartless man for the simple reason that she endeavoured to renew a right spirit within him. Truly was this an instance of suffering stripes for Christ's sake!

"My poor child," exclaimed Mrs. Cheyne, "we pity you from the bottom of our hearts. We need not tell you where to look for aid and strength, dear; only we conjure you to cheer up. Forgive him we know you will: try and forget also, and don't let this man's heartlessness worry you."

"I have already forgiven him, dear Mrs. Cheyne, but I can never forget," sobbed Eva.

"Nor shall it be easily forgotten by any one here if I can help it," exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple, wrathfully gathering up the skirt of her habit preparatory to leaving. "It's a most shameful heartless piece of business altogether. If I can judge other people's feelings by mine, I expect Captain and Mrs. Carr will find Khalsapore very hot for them when they come. You must run over and spend the day with me soon, Eva dear, and don't be indulging in low spirits. You have every right-thinking person, man and woman, on your side, and what is more, your conscience tells you this blow has come to you by obeying God's orders. May He bless and comfort you, dear," and, kissing Eva, the three ladies mounted their horses and cantered home in the glaring sun.

CHAPTER IV.

Eva Fosbrooke—Lawn Tennis at Mrs. Dalrymple's—Mr. Henniker asks Eva to dance—Our heroine's case discussed—Colonel Morton sounds Eva's father.

Eva Fosbrooke, our heroine, is between three and four and twenty years old. She has beautiful brown eyes and hair. Her features are clear cut. Her mouth is a trifle too large, but redeemed by the sweet smile which discloses teeth like pearls. She is tall and slim with a most striking figure, for so few of even our unmarried countrywomen out here can preserve this characteristic after any long absence from their native clime. She has a sweet mezzo soprano voice and plays both the piano and harp. She is a good horsewoman, and an adept in Lawn Tennis, Badminton and Archery. She has a passion for flowers, her garden being the best in the station. Eva is thoroughly good in the broadest sense of the term. She attends service twice on Sundays, and is Mr. Molehampton's right hand in all charitable undertakings. Twice a week does she make a pilgrimage to the married men's quarters in the European Barracks at the other end of the station. On these occasions she goes armed with her Bible. Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Atkins out here are sufficiently well provided by Government with the necessities, nay luxuries, of life to need them from others. Among the soldiers' women, Eva's experiences are varied. By some she is scoffed at, others listen in sullen silence, some again, out of that innate respect, borne by the lower classes towards their superiors, put a chair for her, and hear her read and expound with apparent attention, while their thoughts are otherwise occupied. Others, a few, look on the young lady's visits as bright spots in their existence; these receive the word with avidity and act up to all the reader's exhortations, welcome her with a blessing and bid her God-speed when she leaves them. Her austere puritanical ideas on certain points had made her some enemies, though her winning ways and numerous accomplishments had endeared her

to many. Mrs. Drummond Dalrymple, and her husband, the Deputy Commissioner of the District, admired and liked her. Old Colonel Cheyne, Commanding the Wing of the Cardiganshire Regiment, swore by her, and she had fast friends in the persons of Mrs. and Miss Cheyne. The former lady, wonderfully young and active for her years, evinced a motherly interest for the half dozen shiftless beardless youths, officers of the Wing commanded by her husband. She would rally the more marriageable among them, ever holding up the Irregular Cavalry Colonel's daughter, as a young lady possessing all the requisites for making any one of them an excellent wife. Then, when she learnt of Eva's engagement, she rejoiced exceedingly and was warm in her felicitations. Aggie Cheyne, her daughter, was to be the Bridesmaid and the good lady had already ordered her wedding gift. When she heard the match was broken off, Mrs. Cheyne wept tears of sympathy for poor Eva, vowing in her mind to let Captain Carr have a bit of it when he came within speaking distance of her, on his return.

It was Lawn Tennis night at Mrs. Dalrymple's. These were very popular entertainments, for as soon as it became too dark to play, some of the Cardiganshire Band would come over, nets would be removed, and half-a-dozen dances would be gone through with great gusto by the assembled guests. A fortnight had elapsed since the purport of Captain Carr's cruel letter had been discussed in all its bearings by the society of the place. Eva, yielding to the solicitations of her father and her friends, had battled with and subdued her grief and had come out for the first time on this particular evening.

"Mrs. Dalrymple," said Henniker, addressing that gorgeous beauty diffidently, "do you think I might ask Miss Fosbrooke to dance with me"?

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Henniker, by all means, it will do her good, poor thing; besides, you know her better than most here."

"May I have the pleasure of this valse with you, Miss Fosbrooke"?

said Henniker, bowing low to Eva.

"Yes, I shall be very glad," and they floated away to the die-away strains of "My Queen."

"Dare I offer you my sympathy, Miss Fosbrooke " ? he said, as they promenaded.

"Sympathy is always sweet, Mr. Henniker," she replied, artlessly, "and I am thankful for yours."

"Every one feels for you, every one wonders how any man in his senses could throw away such a— a—."

"Such a what, Mr. Henniker " ?

"Such a priceless jewel as you are," he blurted forth.

"Hush " ! she said, "I am no better than any one else. We all have our sorrows and disappointments, and this one has come to me ; it is my portion, that is all."

"But"—

"But me, no buts, Mr. Henniker, come let us take another turn."

Eva danced beautifully, and her partner was no mean proficient in the Terpsichorean art. She was dressed in a pretty pompadour, the short skirts of which revealed her long symmetrical feet cased in fashionable shoes, and which kept such admirable time to the music. How many shortcomings does a pretty foot, prettily clad make up in a woman's get-up ! The hat may be ever so ancient, the dress may be ever so ill-fitting, but if all ends in a pair of nice feet adorned with "fetching" shoes and hose, how much do they make up for imperfections elsewhere.

"Poor child," murmured Colonel Morton, his eyes following Eva, "I am glad to see her about again. A dance will do her good, 'twas kind of Henniker, asking her ; most of the young fellows fight shy of her."

"Why " ? asked Mrs. Thorowbad, the Superintending Engineer's wife, a buxom matron with a large progeny, some at home and some at her bungalow up yonder.

"They have an idea she is too strait-laced, will commence asking them their catechisms, and so forth."

"But she is very orthodox, is she not ?"

"My dear lady, she may be, but is that to be accounted a fault ? Are we not all taught to revere the name of God, to have a lively faith in His goodness ? and because one of us chuses to

be a more faithful servant of His, are we to look askance at him and say he's a puritan, he's a canter, and a preacher?"

"Indeed, no," sighed Mrs. Thorowbad, "I only wish I was as good as she."

"Besides, look you, Mrs. Thorowbad, Miss Fosbrooke's earnestness and seriousness does not prevent her from entering into and enjoying the pleasures and pastimes God gives us in all reason. I have met her on her way to the Barracks of a morning. Later on she and I have rehearsed our parts for the theatricals. I am referring to those we had last Christmas. Then she'd enjoy her lawn tennis, and in the evening she's been my partner in a quadrille. Her religion is a pleasure, not a burden to her."

"They are coming out shortly, are they not?" here put in Mrs. Doyle.

"Mail after next," replied Colonel Morton.

"That reminds me, Colonel Morton," exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple, coming to the chairs in time to overhear the last remark, "how are they to be received?"

"How do you mean, Mrs Dalrymple?"

"I mean, after what has happened, are Captain and Mrs. Carr to be welcomed with open arms as honored additions to our community, and as if he had done no insult and injury to one who is an universal favourite among us?"

"Well," replied Colonel Morton, twirling his drooping moustache reflectively, "that's a point that requires consideration. Suppose, Mrs. Dalrymple, you convene a meeting and we settle the matter at once."

"Not at all a bad idea, especially as people don't appear at all to know what to do about it; but the question is what Colonel Fosbrooke's intentions are. He might be contemplating a breach of promise suit."

"His daughter, you mean."

"Well, his daughter then, but I am certain she is far too forgiving and would never agree to such a step."

"The thing is to find out. Where is Fosbrooke?"

"There! in the verandah," exclaimed Miss Cheyne. "He is smoking with papa."

"I'll go and sound him," said Colonel Morton, lounging away towards the house.

"Fosbrooke," he said, accosting his friend, "step this way, will you? Excuse me, Colonel," he added, apologetically, to Colonel Cheyne. "Look here," he continued, taking his companion's arm and strolling towards the gates, "what about Carr?"

"What about him?"

"He'll be out in another fortnight with his newly-married wife."

"Well, and what of it, I say?"

"The feeling against him is, as you may suppose, very strong, and people seem determined to shew their disapproval of what he has done; but in this they will be greatly guided by your attitude towards him. In plain words, does Miss Fosbrooke intend hauling him up?"

"For breach of promise, mean you?"

"Aye."

"My dear fellow, no, I have urged the step on Eva, but she's a forgiving little soul, and won't hear of it."

"What's your own opinion then?"

"About Carr's conduct?"

"Yes."

"I consider his behaviour damnable, Morton," exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke, furiously. "In our fathers' time he'd have been very differently dealt with; but all I can now do is to cut the man dead and have no speech with him but on official matters. His own conscience should urge him to get out of the regiment, for he'll receive no mercy or countenance from me, I can tell you."

"Exactly, and you will find the whole station go with you."

"I am sure if it does, 'twill be but what Carr deserves. My poor Eva never did or contemplated anything unkind to the man. You all know her well; some, you included, from her childhood, and I defy anyone to assert that she is not an angel of goodness, and is well rid of a worthless ruffian."

"She is indeed, Fosbrooke," replied Morton, kindly. "It will

be a matter of wonderment if Carr does not repent of his behaviour to your daughter, and I bet he'll live to regret having lost so priceless a jewel through his own folly."

"God bless you, Morton, for saying this," replied Colonel Fosbrooke, in an agitated voice. "It shows that you, at all events, dear old chum, know my Eva's worth, if others don't."

CHAPTER V.

Tickets for soup—At the Racket Court—Fred Trollys makes himself disagreeable—What Fitzmaurice heard of Trollys at the Ishmaelabad Races.

"Chittee, Huzoor."

"Hullo, wait a minute," exclaimed Henniker, at the Racket Court, as a chuprassie handed him a granite note. "From Mrs. D. D., what can she want? Here you are, Fitzmaurice, Mrs. Dalrymple asks you and me to afternoon Tea, above all things in the world, I wonder what the devil's up. Afternoon Tea! and at 4 o'clock too."

"Our chittee hy?" asked Trollys of the chuprassie.

"Hian Huzoor Bâkus men bahoot hayn."

"Laykur ao yahn," and Trollys overhauled the contents of the box.

"None for you, eh," remarked Fagan, the Irregulars' Doctor, taking his note out of the lot.

"No," growled Trollys, "but I am not in favour with Madame La Superbe."

"Nor are you anywhere else," muttered Henniker under his breath.

"What's all this fuss Marrowspoon was telling me about last night," asked Trollys.

"What fuss?"

"Miss Fosbrooke, don't you know?"

"I don't call that a fuss," said Henniker, "I call it a very natural outburst of indignation against Carr for playing her a very hankey-pankey trick."

"But what's in the wind? Marrowspoon speaks of a

confounded long jawbation you all had on Madame La Superbe's tennis courts yesterday evening."

"What should make you think anything was in the wind, as you call it, Trollys?" asked Fagan.

"Simply because Mrs. Dalrymple's lot were all herded together and those not her own peculiars were nowhere."

"You mean Marrowspoon and others of his kidney, I suppose," remarked Fitzmaurice.

"Aye, he, Featherstonehaugh, Ross and old Partridge."

"I expect the fellows you name are merely admitted to Mrs. Dalrymple's tennis parties on sufferance."

"Yes," ejaculated Trollys, "Thick-headed fools! they know they are not welcome, and yet they go."

"All their own fault," remarked Fagan, "and for that matter, you never show there now, Trollys."

"Not I, after that affair of Madame La Superbe's slavery."

"But she forgave you, I thought. She called you up to her horse's side at last month's Gymkhana, shook hands with you, and all that, didn't she?"

"I know," replied Trollys, a scowl on his handsome face, "but she heaped coals of fire on my head by doing so. Then Dalrymple, too, asking me to dine with him at the Cardiganshire Mess. I hate them! her especially."

"No more, Trollys!" ejaculated Henniker, hotly, "you'll be abusing Mrs. Dalrymple next, and that I won't stand."

"Hullo! who made you a ruler over Israel?" retorted the other, rising and approaching Henniker.

"You'd much better shut up, Trollys," said Fitzmaurice, who saw a storm was brewing. "For God's sake man, keep your opinions and your hatreds to yourself."

"I don't care what I say, and who hears me," exclaimed Trollys. "I know everyone here dislikes me, and as everyone's hand is against me, why I'll have mine against everyone, confound you all."

"Come, come, Trollys," Fagan interrupted, hooking his arm and leading him away. "Don't be creating a quarrel for actually nothing. Henniker is as fiery as the very deuce, and there'll

be a row if you go on like this. If you are not going to play and can't keep the peace, better toddle home like a good fellow."

"I tell you what it is, Henniker," exclaimed Trollys, facing about at the door of the court, "I foretell a devilish hot time for you in the coming business. I can guess what it's all about. The whole lot of you are determined to make it unpleasant for the Carrs. I know, too, where your own inclinations lean. We all know you are spooney, but I tell you you'll be disappointed, and if I say you'll smell hell through it all, I use a very mild term," and, treating his brother officer to a scowl of defiance, he turned and left the court.

Poor Henniker, little did he foresee how true the prophecy would eventually turn out !

"Fool ! is he mad or drunk ?"

"Rather the former, I should say," replied Fagan, returning to his friends. "Poor devil, I pity him ; his confounded cynicism and scepticism, added to his overweening vanity, have been and will continue to be his enemies through life."

"And his ideas on women too," remarked Henniker.

"This reminds me of a story about Trollys that man Trelawney of the Belooch Horse told me when I went down to Ishmaelabad for the Races," said Fitzmaurice, musingly.

"What was it ? let's have it," exclaimed both his companions.

"Well, it appears," commenced the other, "our friend, some years ago, was stationed at Golcondah in the Deccan. He belonged to a British Cavalry corps there. Among the people of the place was a Major Nordman in one of the native regiments. Mrs. N. was a very attractive woman and sang divinely. Trollys struck up acquaintanceship with the couple, and in due course, from being a casual visitor he became a constant dropper-in, promiscuous like, don't you know. You are aware I dare say how, out here, such a sort of familiarity begets confidences, how people come to know of each other's private concerns, state of their finances, and so forth. Trollys was therefore not long in finding out that Nordman was awfully in debt, and that sowcars and fellows besieged the house daily. One morning on.

his going over he found Mrs. Nordman in tears, while standing in the room was a brute of a sowcar. Trollys asked what was the matter, when Mrs. Nordman came out with it all. The fellow, it appeared, was their chief creditor, and had come to be paid, accompanied by a bailiff or some one of that sort. Trollys took in the situation at a glance, and saw his advantage. To ask the amount, and tell the sowcar to go over to his bungalow and wait for him there, when he'd give him a cheque, was the work of a moment, Trollys having, as you know, lots of money of his own. Mrs. Nordman was of course awfully grateful, and in the exuberance of her feelings she threw herself into his arms and kissed him. Bad move that, wasn't it? However it ended in Trollys getting Nordman to give him a schedule of his debts, and advancing him the money, repayable in easy instalments without interest, coupled with a proviso from Nordman to avoid running into difficulties again. After this, as may be imagined, Trollys was more than ever at the house, came there as a sort of right now, don't you know. He thought he was sure of his game; and made violent love to the poor little wife, who, fearful of offending the man, whom she and her husband were under such obligations to, dared not object to his soft speeches, his toyings, and so forth. Well the day for paying the first instalment came round. Trollys was at the house, and Nordman brought him the amount in notes. 'My dear fellow,' he laughed, putting aside the money, 'you don't take me for a sowcar, do you? You need not be so confoundedly punctual in paying me. Your wife, I'm sure, wants a lot of new things, spend all that money on her, it will please me far better.' Thus he let them off the first instalment and they were fools enough to yield. Weak of them, wasn't it? Well, a Ball came off soon after this, and at it, the denouement took place. Trollys, with Mrs. Nordman for his partner, took her to walk about in the grounds after a valse. A short time afterwards, during a lull in the dancing, and while the people were all more or less grouped about the sofas and settees running round the walls, the pair re-entered the room; they walked up to the centre, when before Trollys knew well where he was, Mrs. N. up with

her hands and boxed his ears soundly in regular one-two fashion, to the astonishment and wonderment of the two hundred or so witnesses of the scene. 'There, you brute!' she gasped, with concentrated fury, 'that's your reward for your base conduct! He has made insulting propositions to me,' she added, addressing startled on-lookers. 'We owe him a large sum of money which he helped us with, in, as we thought, disinterested friendship. But now he was vile enough to remind me of the obligation, telling me I had it in my power to repay him at once.' You can imagine the scene. Trollys was requested by the General's Aide-de-camp to leave the room, the ladies took care of Mrs. Nordman, and the next day a lot of good people got together and raised the money to enable the Nordmans to pay Trollys in full, who very soon cleared out of Golcondah, you bet."

"But what did Nordman do?" asked Henniker.

"When?"

"Why, when the row took place in the Ball room."

"Oh! he was at the other end of the place, playing Nap or something, and did not hear of the business until after Master Trollys had made tracks."

"Gad!" said Henniker, "I'd have gone for him, tracks or no tracks."

"So he wanted to," said Fitzmaurice, "but his wife went down on her knees there in front of them all and implored him to let him go."

"And he agreed?"

"Yes."

"Didn't people misconstrue the thing?"

"Can't say," replied Fitzmaurice, "I was not there, but I dare say there were uncharitable folks present that evening as they always and ever are."

"You are right there, Fitz," exclaimed Fagan; "however she must have been a glorious little woman, but come, I feel dry after all that, let's have a peg."

"Quy hy!"

"Huzoor!"

"Peg lao."

"Bahut ucha, Huzoor!"

CHAPTER VI.

Clara Dalrymple at home—Afternoon Tea—The great question discussed—Henniker has a happy thought—A noble forgiving woman.

Clara Dalrymple prided herself on her house and surroundings generally. She has a great idea of living comfortably, and going through life with the least amount of trouble and worry. Overflowing with the milk of human kindness, blessed with abundant means, both in her own right, and her husband's ample salary, her share of this sphere's woes and ills are far below the average. But we must all have our own particular skeleton. We must each have our own cross to bear. This life would not be this life were it not so. Mrs. Dalrymple had no children; yet she doated on them, and when, in the course of her philanthropic career, she would visit the bedside of some newly-made mother, Clara would shed bitter tears as she stooped to kiss the little stranger presented for her inspection by the proud parent. Beautifully formed, with proportions of the grandest, people wondered at, and it was a matter of wonderment to herself, her remaining unblessed with offspring. She was much attached however to her husband, and but for this one cause for regret, they would have been perfectly happy. At first, when the disappointment was keen and hard to thole, they indulged in mutual recrimination and their married life, for a space, was clouded with discord and variance. In time however their better sense came to their rescue, and they mutually resolved to bear their cross patiently and abide God's good pleasure. When, during the earlier days of their wedded life indulging in dreams of olive branches appearing Dalrymple always hoped for a daughter, while Clara prayed to be blessed with a son. As days passed, their anticipations gradually fell to zero, and now we find them after ten years of life together, still childless, but looking at their disappointment in a sensible light, and loving each other very fondly. Clara is at this time thirty-four years of age, and her husband a few years her senior. See we her now in her elegant drawing room waiting for her guests; for

this is the evening they are all to come to tea to discuss the manner in which the Carrs are to be received; a most delicate piece of business altogether, which would require the nicest handling. The room is very handsomely furnished, blackwood everywhere; marble top tables, cabinets, stands with curious old china and bric à brac meet the eye on all sides. The walls are adorned with pictures, and the tables loaded with albums, articles of vertu, vases full of flowers, and so forth. The grand piano stands at one end of the room and a handsome American organ at the other. Clara herself is attired in a pompadour costume fitting tight to her gorgeous shape; the clinging skirt reveals the sweeping length of limb, the magnificent breadth of hip, while beneath the muslin frilling running round the bottom of her dress, her pretty shapely feet are generously displayed cased in hose to suit her dress and medicis shoes. She appears to advantage without her Gainsborough, for now can be seen the wealth of her golden hair, brought down on to her forehead in natural curls and ending in a massive Grecian knot low on her neck. She is sitting thoughtfully in an arm-chair, playing with her fan and waiting for her friends, a true picture of stately full blown English womanhood, rendered a thousand times more attractive by the knowledge of the heart within being thoroughly good and honest.

The people dropped in one after another. Refreshments in the shape of tea, coffee, thin bread and butter, marmalade, with cake and biscuits were handed round by solemn-looking khansamahs wearing the Dalrymple crest in silver pinned to their puggrees. There was whisky and soda for those who preferred it.

"Oh, you may smoke, Colonel Morton," cried Clara, graciously noticing that gallant officer's wistful gaze towards his cheroot case lying by his hat on the window sill. "You may all smoke," she continued, beaming on the gentlemen of the party, "provided none of you ladies mind; it may tend to brighten your intellects and help us to arrive at something fair this evening."

"Thanks, Mrs. Dalrymple," answered Morton, proceeding to light a long Trichy. "The thing is," he continued between the

puffs, "how are we to receive Carr after his unfair and unkind conduct to our young friend. For my part I think his conduct disgraceful, and I for one shall not call on his wife."

"If you don't call on his wife, Morton, Carr himself will feel affronted," remarked Colonel Cheyne.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Dalrymple. "If Captain Carr has a conscience, it will smite him all too surely and tell him that any coldness he may receive from us is but the consequences of his infamous behaviour to the dear girl he deceived."

"Question is, does he possess a conscience," put in Henniker, quietly twirling his deer-stalker between his hands.

"We all have one," said Mr. Molehampton, "but the question is, whether it be void of offence towards God and towards man."

"Certainly Captain Carr's conscience can't be held void of offence towards man in this case, Mr. Molehampton," replied Mrs. Cheyne.

"Towards a pretty woman rather," added Henniker, in an audible sotto voice, at which Dr. Fagan laughed, and a titter pervaded the room.

"We can't altogether ignore them, and yet we can't countenance Captain Carr as long as any of us have a spark of regard for Colonel Fosbrooke and Eva, poor child," said Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Then not countenancing Captain Carr, how shall we behave to his wife," asked Dr. Fagan.

"There's the rub," ejaculated Colonel Morton, getting up to flick his cheroot ash into the verandah, "whatever we do to Carr falls on his wife and *vice versa*."

"I don't think we should make Mrs. Carr suffer for her husband's delinquencies," remarked Mrs. Thorowbad.

"Exactly so, my dear lady," replied Colonel Cheyne, "but a husband and wife, don't you know, are like a brace of nine pins, the ball hits one, and the other falls with it, a sort of co-operative partnership, come weal, come woe."

"I think a deal depends on the sort of woman Mrs. Carr is," remarked Mrs. Cheyne.

"Why?" asked some one.

"Well, now if I were in her place, knowing what my husband had done—and Captain Carr will certainly have told her—I would do my best to conciliate the girl he threw over for me. Seeing also that others in the station, friends of the girl, were offended at my husband's conduct, I should try my utmost to smooth matters, and heal the wounds he had created."

"Nobly said, Mrs. Cheyne," exclaimed the Clergyman impressively, while a murmur of applause ran round the room, and Fitzmaurice faintly clapped his hands.

"But do you think this likely," asked Colonel Morton. "Trollys said something descriptive of Mrs. Carr the other night at Mess; I didn't catch it: does any one know?"

"Yes," answered Major Doyle, "he said he heard Carr often say his idea of a wife was a woman who wouldn't preach or object to him gambling, one fond of horses, a smoker, a pegger, and the enviable possessor of a good figure, or words to that effect."

"Hah! Hah! good figure, forsooth," chuckled Colonel Cheyne, unctuously, "what finer figure, could he wish for than Miss Fosbrooke's, present company excepted," he added, gallantly bowing to the ladies, and especially to his hostess, who smiled and coloured, as she caught sight of her own beautiful shape in an opposite mirror.

"Smoking and drinking, horrible!" ejaculated Mrs. Cheyne "I can forgive her for being fond of horses, but I cannot imagine any one calling herself a lady indulging in the other two."

"Well, then, after this description of the coming Mrs. Carr, do any of you think she's likely to try the *suaviter in modo*, and endeavour to heal old sores, and make things generally pleasant?" asked Colonel Morton.

"No!" came from several parts of the room.

"Exactly! Therefore we are still at our starting point."

"What will his attitude be, I wonder?" asked Mrs. Dalrymple, musingly.

"Certainly depends on his wife," said Major Doyle. "If she's one of your Ouida's beautiful devils, she'll make him resent. I expect she will prove a Tartar and turn the place into a small pandemonium."

"Well, then, what shall we do?" asked the hostess, despairingly.

"May I make a suggestion?" asked Henniker, eagerly.

"Of course, Mr. Henniker, we shall be glad to hear it."

"Get Miss Fosbrooke's opinion."

The idea took the party by surprise; no one had thought of this solution to their difficulty.

"Happy thought, indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple and several others. "Fancy none of us thinking of it when the question became knotty. You go, Mr. Henniker, tell her I want her, and drive her over in your dog-cart."

"With pleasure," he replied, taking up his hat and hastening down the steps.

After a short space Henniker returned with our heroine. He had told her nothing on the way beyond that Mrs. Dalrymple wanted her. Eva gave an enquiring glance round the assembly as she entered the room, but Clara at once accosted her.

"We have sent for you, dear," she said, kissing the girl fondly, "to help us in deciding a question that has been puzzling us all for the last hour; can you guess what it is?"

"It refers perhaps to Captain and Mrs. Carr," replied Eva, quietly. "Papa told me he had an idea that your sympathy for me would induce you to evince your disapproval of his treatment of me. Am I right?"

"Yes, dear, we have been consulting about it, and can arrive at nothing definite, we want you to tell us what to do."

"I would have you do nothing unkind," replied Eva, looking round on the company with tears in her eyes. "Remember I am the most injured party. I forgive Captain Carr his turpitude to the extent of refraining from punishing him as the law allows, I leave him to the smitings of his conscience. It is indeed very kind of you all taking up my case so warmly. He deserves no consideration, no mercy. Yet let us be as merciful as we can. We are all sinners, and we all of us hope for mercy. Leave him therefore to his conscience. I know you all like papa and me too much to abstain altogether from shewing your disapproval of Captain Carr's desertion of me, still I pray you to proceed to

nothing overt. Something tells me that before long he will find out his mistake, and the remorse in store for him will be sufficient punishment. Dear friends, let him be. Follow my example and let him receive his deserts from One to Whom alone belongs vengeance and the power to redress wrong."

As Eva delivered this touching speech, she had risen to her feet, her woollen cloud had fallen from her shoulders and, as she stood before them, her admirable figure displayed by her tight-fitting Princesse robe, a grave and sorrowful yet earnest and pleading look on her face and eyes brimming with tears, her hearers could almost imagine her to be an angel from above in their midst, and she was listened to with a reverend silence. She sat down and, leaning her head on Mrs. Dalrymple's shoulder, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed painfully. Her address had a marked effect on the assembly. Mrs. Cheyne and Mrs. Thorowbad were in tears, and even the strong-minded Clara shewed by the tumultuous heavings of her grand bosom that she too was more than ordinarily affected.

Mr. Molehampton rising, said, "Dear friends, no one could have advised you better. The spirit of forgiveness is strong in this dear young lady. Let us emulate her to the best of our abilities. You have made her the arbitrator in the question before you. Abide you by it, for verily hath God spoken to us by the mouth of his servant. Leave Captain Carr to the punishment of his own conscience and to be dealt with by Him who deals with us according to our iniquities."

The party broke up and all returned to their respective homes.

CHAPTER VII.

Henniker is smitten—Two Chums—Fitzmaurice, his pros and cons—Fitzmaurice, his ways and means—Fitzmaurice, his dodge—Henniker's hopes and fears.

"Gad," exclaimed Henniker, as next morning after parade he and his chum dismounting from their chargers, threw themselves into long arm-chairs in the verandah of their bungalow, "I could have fallen down and worshipped her on the spot."

"Who?" queried Fitzmaurice, lighting a cheroot.

"Who! who but that noble girl, who pleaded so eloquently for that brute Carr yesterday evening; mean to say you were not touched, Fitz?"

"Well, yes I must say I felt a choking sensation in the region of my throttle when she was standing up and addressing the lot of us. Don't know which affected me most, her general scrumptiousness or her beautiful words."

"The whole thing was touching in the extreme, she is an angel that girl, and I think she's deuced well rid of Carr."

"And free to flop her affections on some more deserving fellow, eh, Hen?"

"How can you speak so lightly of her, Fitz; you've no heart."

"I know who had one though."

"Who?"

"You."

"And haven't I one now?"

"I think not."

"In Heaven's name what do you mean, man?"

"The simplest thing possible, Hen," replied Fitzmaurice, regarding his comrade with an amused expression, "you are the fellow who had a heart and you are the fellow who has lost it. No use fooling about, old man, especially with me, your ancient chum and fast friend. You are head and ears in love with Miss Fosbrooke; now out with it, aren't you?"

Henniker coloured through the bronze of five years' Indian sun. "I confess," he said, hesitatingly, "I admire Miss Fosbrooke very—"

"Come, come, old boy," laughed Fitzmaurice, interrupting him. "That cock won't fight, either confide in me entirely or not at all. You know," he added more seriously, "I am awfully fond of you, Hen, we were at school together, and have served together out here for five years, we have never had a row, or anything to disturb our friendship. We therefore deserve each other's confidence."

"Well, I'll be candid with you, Fitz. Yes, I love that girl,

and to kiss the ground she treads on, would be an unspeakable pleasure to me."

"Ah! I thought so. Now all right, but look here, Hen, have you thought of the *pros* and *cons*?"

"What *pros* and *cons*?"

"Any number of them. In the first place, is she the kind of girl who will get over this sort of thing? Does it not strike you her's is one of those temperaments that will keep a wound of this nature open all her life, and carry it with her to her grave?"

"You don't mean to believe that just because she has been jilted by Carr she will remain single all her life and refuse an offer from another fellow more honorable at least than the first?"

"I don't think it at all unlikely, Hen, such things have happened, especially where there is much love on the woman's side; and her devotion to Carr is as patent as any thing, don't you think it is?"

"Alas! yes, I confess there's truth in what you say, Fitz, but there's nothing like trying."

"Try by all means, but for God's sake don't go and cut the throat of the whole affair by being in too great a hurry; give her time to get over this, and when you really think she's all right, then go in; and that you may win, dear boy, will be my most ardent wish."

"You are a dear old brick!" exclaimed Henniker, rising and grasping his comrade's hand. "I'm awfully obliged to you for your advice, and I'll abide by it."

"There's another thing to be considered though," observed Fitzmaurice, after a pause.

"And that is?"

"Ways and means."

"Why, what a beggar you are, Fitz, first with your *pros* and *cons*, now with your ways and means, what is the rub now?"

"Supposing you are successful and she accepts you?"

"Well, I shall be the happiest fellow alive."

"Granted, but on your Lieutenant's pay, you'll have to be

deuced careful in keeping the pot boiling or else you'll get into a state of cussedness which will make life a burden to you. Of course, you know Miss Fosbrooke hasn't a rupee, and the Colonel himself is pretty well dipped."

"I know all that," replied Henniker, "but we should be able to manage right enough; she's not extravagantly inclined, and I am certain she'll take care of my money."

"I feel sure of that, Hen, but look at the Reeveses."

"What about them?"

"He married only a couple of years ago, on about the same pay as you draw now. I know for a fact he was not in debt when he married, but look at them now. She brought him nothing but a pretty face, a plump figure, and a head of red hair. They have had one child, and more may come. Mrs. Reeves is not what you call an extravagant woman; yet, what with having to entertain, children coming, and God knows what not else, Reeves, has not a stiver to knock against another, and it's a hand-to-mouth sort of existence for them at the best."

"Well, what have all this and the state of Reeves' finances got to do with me?"

"I am simply putting a case in point before you, that's all, Hen," replied Fitzmaurice, kindly. "All these things should be well weighed before a fellow plunges into matrimony, the more especially when he has nothing but his bare pay to fall back on. I am only doing my duty in giving you advice. God forbid you think me a kill joy, a wet blanket, and all that sort of thing. Go in and win, dear boy, and I'll be your Bestman, but don't contemplate matrimony lightly, don't go in for the 'marry and blow the expense' dodge, don't you know."

"Never fear, Fitz, I'll bear in mind the heap of good advice you have given, but 'pon my word, talking about these details now is like counting one's chickens before they're hatched."

"No! you are only counting the cost of the chickens before they're hatched," you old Hen, laughed Fitzmaurice. "There's another thing," he remarked, after another pause.

"Good God," exclaimed Henniker, "what more?"

"Should your suit prosper, she will try the same dodge on with you."

"What dodge?"

"The preaching, the Bible-reading, and all that; the same business that made Carr shy off the road, don't you know."

"I'm not afraid of that," replied Henniker, warmly. "I should think it a sweet privilege to listen to her and act up to her exhortations to the best of my ability and power."

"Even when the tinsel has worn off the gingerbread?"

"For ever and aye! If I take her to be my wife, I take her for better and for worse; and God deal with me accordingly should I ever run counter to her inclinations or peculiarities."

"Nobly uttered, Hen, and if you feel strong in this belief, there is nothing more to be said on the subject."

"Look here, Fitz, you know I don't drink."

"Not beyond a couple of mild whisky pegs per diem, and perhaps an extra one on cricket or lawn tennis days; so far so good. Well?"

"You know I don't play."

"Yes, I know that, you won't even put into four-anna pool, and have consequently been dubbed a muff over and over again. Thirdly?"

"Have you ever heard me swear?"

"Not beyond using a big big D when your back has been rubbed the wrong way particularly bad."

"You know, while though far from professing to be a serious or religious man, I have every reverence for God, and endeavour to do my duty to Him and my neighbour as well as I can."

"Granted, all granted."

"Well then, given she accepts me, do you think that her serious tendencies will be distasteful to me? Wherein will she find me wanting? What cause have I to fear her, when doing God's work in using her sweet influence over me to keep me more in mind of Him? I am but a humble sinner, Fitz, but won't His paths be doubly pleasant to traverse, when beckoned

along them by an angelic woman, such as she, and she too my wife? Oh no, I would worship God through her, and through her would I look for grace. What then have I to fear?"

"Nothing, Henniker, nothing," exclaimed Fitzmaurice, rising and putting his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I believe you are as good a man as she is a good woman. May God prosper your suit, dear old boy, which He will assuredly do if He sees fit."

CHAPTER VIII.

Trolly's Telegram—Norah is inquisitive—A retrospect about Norah.

The good P. and O. ship "Andromache" had scarcely dropped anchor off Mazagon Bunder, when a Telegraph chup-rassie clambered up the side and presented Captain Carr with a telegram.

"Who is it from?" asked Mrs. Carr, looking over his shoulder. He reads,—

From Khalsapore,

To Bombay.

From Trollys,

To Captain G. Carr,

Carlton's Irregular Horse,
Passenger per "Andromache."

"Enquire at Watson's for a letter."

"What can Trollys be wanting to write to me for," muttered Carr, more to himself than to his bride.

"Who's Trollys?" she asked.

"A brother officer of mine, Love, rather a bad lot and not much liked in the regiment."

"What has he done?"

"Oh! nothing much at Khalsapore, 'tis more his antecedents that go against him. Stories have got about concerning his career before he came to us, and he is given to air certain objectionable opinions he holds over freely."

"Opinions about what?"

"My dear Norah, you're in an inquisitive mood," remarked Carr, smiling. "He holds very shady ideas on religion and female moral worth."

"Is he handsome and nice?"

"One of the handsomest men in the service. As to being nice, he has lots to say for himself, any amount of brass, has a private fortune, and is an Honorable to boot."

"Then why is he not liked?"

"He is by a certain lot, bachelors and one or two others; but he is barely tolerated in our corps."

"Don't you like him, George?"

"Can't say I do, except for his ever readiness to play and keep a fellow company in a peg or so."

"What is there in him you don't like?"

"My dear, I consider him a dangerous sort of man, and should not like him to be intimate with us."

Mrs. Carr shrugged her handsome shoulders and said nothing. During their brief honeymoon, and the voyage out, she had gathered from her husband's description of the people among whom she was going to stay, that they were what she styled, a "tame lot," and she consequently pictured to herself a dull eventless life out here among a set of humdrums. She heard how several of the leading ladies were given to charity, visiting among the soldiers' women, and so forth. She knew that an occasional hop in one of the Mess Houses, varied every now and then by a "burra khana," formed the sum total of aught in the way of dissipation she was likely to meet with in her new home. She was aware that lawn tennis, paper-chasing and ring-tilting would be the only out-door amusements available for her in that far-away-corner of the earth. Considering all in all, she was disgusted and was already repenting of the step she had taken in binding herself to this officer of Irregular Cavalry, which had necessitated her leaving her old life at home and accompanying him out here to immure herself for an indefinite period in a sleepy goody goody up-country station, where she was fated to waste all her sweetness on the desert air.

Norah Burke's father was an officer in the Bengal Army. Losing his wife soon after the birth of this one daughter, and himself invalided from wounds received during the Mutiny,

Major Burke went home and settled at Brighton with his black-haired, black-eyed little Norah, who was then ten years old. In course of time she was put as a day-scholar at one of the best young Lady's educational establishments in the town, and the Major happening just at this time to come in for a moderate legacy, they lived in comfort and contentment. Norah grew rapidly, and knowing ones pronounced that the tall slip of a child would expand into a magnificent woman. Except in her music and singing, Norah was not over-successful with her studies. She was however passionately fond of poetry, and would, with book in hand, march up and down the room, reading long pieces with a power and pathos that astounded her hearers. They told the father his daughter was a born-actress. The Major would smile and say that no girl of his would ever walk the boards if he could help it. Ah! how much better for Norah had he adhered to this resolution. At the close of 1868, or when Norah was about thirteen years old, George Carr, then a young Lieutenant of Bengal Lancers, went home on furlough after the Abyssinian Expedition; for his share in which bloodless campaign he was awarded the medal and a round sum in the shape of batta. Residing at Brighton, it was not long before he came across Major Burke. Coming from the same Presidency, the two grew very intimate, talking of scenes and places familiar to both. It ended in the Major asking the young officer to leave his Hotel and come and take a room in his cottage. Carr assented readily, the more so, as the modest share of his expenses in the Major's household was an agreeable release from the exorbitant charges at the Hotel. He saw a good deal of Norah during his year's residence with her father, and, fond of it himself, he aided and abetted the child in her passion for declaiming. He would sit for hours listening to her reading from our best poets. Throwing the book aside, she would then quote Shakespeare by the page, while he would sit spell-bound astonished at her passion, her feeling, her pathos wherewith she would deliver her words. Anon she would sit down at the piano and play and sing selections from the Operas in a style that rendered him mute with admiration. Then

when his furlough came to an end, and as he was leaving, he kissed the child fondly and predicted that in time she would be a great actress. So he went back to India. Nine years after he again came to England; this time as Eva Fosbrooke's promised husband. But a change had come over George Carr during the interval between his farewell kiss to his betrothed and his landing in England. On the voyage, in calm still moonlight nights smoking his cigar and pacing the deck alone, George pondered on the prospect before him. Gradually the idea that he and Eva were not suited to each other, assumed force and shape. He thought of her many attractions, her winning ways, and the confiding look in her eyes when he had bid her good-bye at Khalsapore, just a few days since. He knew she was everything that is good, but this very knowledge troubled him, for he felt she was too good for him. Then he thought of her zeal and perseverance on religious matters, and how irksome he found this to be. He asked himself again and again if he would be wise in marrying Eva Fosbrooke. Away from the immediate influence of her undeniably numerous attractions, his heart answered in the negative. He pictured her as his wife (perhaps fated to be so for another fifty years if both lived), exercising her privilege of being such, and using all her energies to bring him to have a livelier sense of religion. For himself he was convinced he would never turn to her way of thinking. He would either have to succumb or fight. The former he felt himself incapable of doing; while the latter would cause their life to be a perpetual difference. Eva, he knew, would never tire in her endeavours to convert him, and he was equally convinced he would never yield. Thus did he come to the resolution that it would be better if he did not marry Eva. He determined therefore to disentangle himself. With a view to preparing the way, he purposely omitted writing to her from several points on the route, and wording those letters he did send her in a gradually decreasing loving strain. Then when he deemed she was sufficiently prepared, he would write and ask her to release him. So he landed. Living in London and frequenting a Club, he heard loud praises of a

certain new actress in every man's mouth, a woman who had made her *début* in the Provinces, but who had raised such a storm of admiration that a London Manager had secured her at an enormous outlay, and at whose Theatre she was to appear for the first time on this particular night, as the leading lady in one of Shakespeare's master-pieces. The house was crowded. The curtain rose and there she stood a gloriously handsome Juno-like woman, with piercing black eyes, raven hair, and a skin of alabaster whiteness. Carr started, he thought the features familiar, but when she began to speak in a deep melodious voice, all doubt vanished and he recognised in the superb being before him, his little friend Norah Burke of nine years ago ! The performance was a grand success. The new star enraptured the audience, and bouquets were showered on her, when at the call of the enthusiastic house she came forward on to the stage before the curtain finally dropped. George Carr lost no time in finding her out. Norah was very glad to meet him again, and told him her history. Her fondness for the stage had grown with her, but beyond witnessing a few performances at Brighton, her father did not further indulge her fancy. Then came a girl to her school, a boarder, who besides being as fond of acting as Norah, had actually performed in amateur theatricals. These two soon imbued the other girls with the same liking, and in a short time the whole school was stage-mad. Norah speedily proved herself to be an actress of accomplishments above the ordinary. Indeed her talents in this respect got bruited abroad in Brighton, and she became in great request at charade parties and amateur theatricals. Her too indulgent father meekly gave in, and allowed her to ride her hobby to the full. "No matter, so long as she does not become a professional," he would say to himself. But the mischief was in active progress. Norah plunged into a vortex of gaiety, dissipation and play-acting. Courtied for her budding beauty, admired for her talent, for some years she drank to the dregs the cup of pleasure and frivolity. Her mind was completely turned by the long lease of flattery and adulation she was treated to by one and all. But now came a time when her father fell ill and

he was ordered to try the German spas. For three years did Major Burke and his daughter wander all over Europe. It was a purposeless, aimless existence, but not without its charm for the already partly vitiated mind of Norah. The handsome, exuberantly-built English "Miss" commanded attention wherever she went. Foreign Barons and Counts bowed down to her, and whispered insidious wickednesses into her ear, against which however she managed to remain proof. Foreign Baronesses and Countesses taught her to gamble, smoke cigarettes, drink Lager beer, look without blushing through albums of "high art" photographs, read novels, translations from the French, and sip Chartreuse, and against these minor sins she was not proof. Her father, an invalid confined to his room, dozed his few remaining hours away while his daughter went gaily down that broad road that leads to destruction. Their semi-nomad life and her then ignorance of German alone, prevented her from walking the boards of Continental theatres, so she contented herself by going nightly to the performances with her high-born patronesses, returning to her lodgings at unearthly hours, awaking her father from his troubled slumbers, and not concerning herself about him or his comfort so long as she found congenial society and amusement. At last her father died. They were at Dresden, and Norah was spending the day with a Saxon Baroness, learning from her the art of swimming. On her return home late that night, she found her father dead in his bed. "I went at once," she continued, "to some of the English residents and told them of papa's death. I had no money, nor was any found in papa's desk. They raised a subscription, which paid for the funeral and left me enough over to carry me back to England. This was a year and a half ago. My pension, as an Indian officer's daughter, is a mere nothing; so being free, I resolved to go on the stage and earn my own livelihood. I wrote to my old school-fellow, telling her of papa's death, my poor circumstances, and asking her to get me employment. A few days afterwards I received a letter from the Manager of the Commisford Theatre, saying that on the recommendation of Mrs. Thorpe, my quondam schoolmate, he was desirous of

seeing what I could do, and asked me to go there. By the same post I heard from my friend, enclosing me a twenty pound note. I ran up to Commisford, had a satisfactory interview with the Manager, and was given a leading part. My first appearance brought the house down, the Manager raved over me and engaged me forthwith on a good salary. We went through the Western counties, and I had the satisfaction of seeing myself lauded sky-high in the papers. While we were playing at Bristol, Mr. Langhorne, my present Manager, came on purpose to see me perform. He seems to have been awfully taken with me, for not only did he pay a large forfeit for me, but engaged me at a salary nearly double my former one. So here I am, and thus it is we meet once more: nearly ten years, is'nt it."

CHAPTER IX.

How George Carr asked Norah to be his wife—A letter from Trollys—A bad look-out—Norah Carr shows her claws—The beginning of the end.

She was seated on a low chair in her morning room at her Hotel, she was clad in merely a loose wrapper and her hair hung down her back. She looked divinely ravishingly beautiful, and as she finished her narration, she clasped her hands behind her head, leaning back on her chair, and there was a short silence.

"Do you like the life?" Carr asked at last.

"*Comme ça, comme ça*, as they say across the Channel. It is tiring work, and one gets surfeited with the same thing night after night."

"And do you intend continuing on the stage?"

"That depends," she said, "if something better turned up. I might be tempted to cut the whole concern."

"Something better?"

"Yes."

She looked at him enquiringly, but said nothing. Her rooms at the great Hotel at Paddington were always open to Carr, to him she was always at home. Her French maid made no excuses when he presented himself. From being an occasional

morning caller, his visits became more frequent. He would hear her parts, and attend her to the theatre, joining her at supper afterwards. He would escort her about London, and fetch and carry for her. She was very beautiful and very fascinating, she had an exceedingly melodious voice. She was one of the best equestriennes in the Parks, whither George Carr attended her. Her admirers were in themselves a host, still he was gratified to see she treated all these in an off-hand fashion, no one being more favoured than his fellows. Carr mentally compared her with Eva, put this woman's bold unabashed manners in juxtaposition with the softness, the gentleness of the girl he had left behind him, and he thanked his good genius he was still free to ask this Actress to be his wife. Her very Bohemianism possessed a charm for him. Everything "*outré*" she did only rendered her more loveable in his eyes, and there was no further concealing the truth, George Carr fell madly in love with the handsome Actress. Norah, on her part, was fully alive to the uncertainties of her present profession. She was a lady by birth and instinct, and she knew she would remain beyond the pale, so long as she continued at her present avocation. She too had learnt to love this Indian officer in her off-hand sort of way, and she thought that as his wife she would have a surer position than were she to continue to be an Actress of a London Theatre. So one night, when they were returning from the play, after one of Norah's most decided triumphs, she made room for him on the seat beside her and invited him to occupy it. Intoxicated with her beauty and the close contact of her beautiful form as he sat by her side, he stole his arm round her waist, and asked her to be his wife.

"I am not good, you know," she replied, reclining her head on his shoulder, "I mean I don't say my prayers, go to Church, and all that."

"Nor do I, darling," he exclaimed, in a delirium of excitement, "and, I think, I love you all the better for it."

"Very well then, if you will take me as I am, I will be your wife."

They were married a week after, and then George Carr wrote that memorable letter to Colonel Fosbrooke.

Directly Captain and Mrs. Carr arrived at Watson's, he obtained his letter. He opened and read as follows:—

KHALSAPORE,

"MY DEAR CARR,

12th February 18 .

I hope this will catch you, I address it to Watson's as you are pretty certain to go there, it being the only decent hotel in Bombay since old Pallonjee died; his son does not look after the hotel half so well as the old man did. But to the object of my writing to you. I don't think you and Mrs. Carr (to whom pray present my compliments) will find things pleasant here, and I write to warn you beforehand. Your affair with Miss Fosbrooke, you know, has raised a small social cyclone, and the good people are dead against you, to a man and woman, with but few exceptions, of which I am one. They've been having confabs about you, and only the other day Mrs. Dalrymple had a regular tea fight, to which all those in her set were invited, and your business was nicely sifted. I have not learnt the upshot, for none of my intimates were there. I tried to worm it out of that young ass, Henniker, but Fitzmaurice spoilt my game and I could learn nothing. I can guess though, pretty shrewdly, what they are about. I think they are not going to let you off scot-free for shying away from Miss Fosbrooke. Your reasons for doing so are well known, for the Colonel read out your letter to a lot of people who were at the Post Office at the time of its receipt. For my part I congratulate you on your escape. I could never fancy you with your broad ideas taking a girl of Miss Fosbrooke's mawkish type in tow. I consider you are well out of it. Mrs. Dalrymple still takes the lead in all things, and I continue to hate the woman. Consequently you can imagine I don't have a very pleasant time of it. Trusting you are both quite well, and hoping you'll successfully tackle all the virtuous indignants, who, like fat bulls of Bashan, are ready to gape at you in religious horror for your delinquencies,

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

FRED. TROLLYS.

P.S.—The Colonel himself is as hard as nails on you. He

has given out his intention of cutting you dead. You have to thank Miss Fosbrooke's general milk and wateriness that you are not hauled up for B. of P.

F. T."

"That's one consolation, George," remarked Norah, when the letter had been perused.

"What is?"

"Why that they are not going to haul you up for damages."

"That, I think, to be a very minor consideration, Norah," replied Carr, gravely, "we could easily pay up between us, but the rest bothers me."

"What, your Colonel cutting you?"

"Yes, that and the attitude people may take towards us."

"You think then that they will make themselves disagreeable?"

"From what Trollys says it appears they have formed a sort of coalition for our special behoof."

"For our special annoyance rather, I should say. But, George, it is not likely they would trouble themselves much about us unless set on by Miss Fosbrooke."

"Of course not, dear; she naturally must feel very sore, and the others sympathize with her."

"Why do they?"

"Well, she's the Colonel's daughter, that's one thing; and, secondly, most of them are so confoundedly religious and prudish that she has great influence over them, especially the women."

"Did you anticipate any unpleasantness of this kind, George?"

"Well, I confess I did, my dear, but not to the extent this letter predicts."

"All I know is," exclaimed Mrs. Carr, hotly, "that I won't brook coldness or insolence from anyone. Had you any idea (as you confess you had) that your marrying me would ever embroil you, and me too, with your friends out here, you should not have brought me to India. I tell you beforehand that, unless

I am well received and properly treated, I shall play the very devil. I left a perfectly happy life to marry you, and you have done me a cruel wrong in making me liable to unpleasantnesses such as that letter plainly hints at as being in store for me, so I tell you now—look out for yourself."

Mrs. Carr was not given to tears, she delivered herself of the above speech in a low deep voice, a frown contracting her handsome face and with her grand bosom upheaved. Already had she shown the cloven hoof on several occasions; already had Carr found out that this glorious woman had a temper the reverse of angelical. They had had several conversations about Miss Fosbrooke, and she had all along said that her husband would have to pay the penalty of his defection from that young lady in some shape or other. Carr would soothe her fears by expressing his assurance that the Colonel and his daughter would make no fuss over it, but Norah had insisted that nothing short of heavy damages would satisfy them. She had saved a considerable sum of money, and her love for her husband was still sufficiently green to allow of her giving him full control over it. This difficulty then she thought could easily be met, but to come to a strange land, among strange people, the honorably wedded wife of an officer in a distinguished corps, a bride of not two months' standing, and yet to be told to prepare to be received with odium and reproach by her fellow-countrymen and women among whom she had come to sojourn, was hard indeed to bear with equanimity. No persuasion, no argument of the unfortunate husband, could assuage or appease her. She lashed herself into fury, the worse side of Norah's nature came uppermost at once, and Carr already beheld with consternation his wife's ungovernable conduct. Sorely did his mind misgive him, and already did he repent of having taken this lovely woman to his bosom. There was no help for it now though. The journey to Khalsapore was a most unhappy one. Norah, thoroughly exasperated at the prospect before her, vented all her ill temper on her husband, her unceasing lamentations cutting and galling him to the marrow. For some time he bore with the ten thousand and one reproaches she hurled

at his head. At last he was goaded to retort, and then commenced a series of mutual recriminations which embittered the whole of the journey up the river; and in this unenviable frame of mind the newly married couple found themselves at the Khalsapore landing place.

CHAPTER X.

The Carrs arrive at Khalsapore—Trollys fathoms Norah and lays his plans—An alliance—Reflections by the way.

The "Raddox" had hardly made fast to her moorings before an officer in the uniform of Carlton's Ressalah trotted up to the landing place, and, giving his reins to a bystander, hastened across the plank connecting the vessel with the shore.

"Just in time," exclaimed Trollys, for it was he advancing along the deck with outstretched hand to where Carr was standing, "just in time to welcome you back," and the brother officers shook hands cordially.

"Let me introduce Captain Trollys of ours, dear," said Carr, turning to his wife, who was lounging on an easy chair, "Captain Trollys, Mrs. Carr;" the gentleman uncovered and bowed low, but Norah, too inert or too cross to get up, stretched out her hand, saying, "I have heard a good deal about you, Captain Trollys, and I am very glad to see you."

"Which means, I hope that all you have heard of me redounds to my credit," he answered, pleasantly, taking Norah's taper fingers and pressing them warmly.

"Had you been painted in colours blacker than those usually supposed to be affected by his Satanic majesty, I should feel pleased to see you," she answered, regarding the young officer attentively. "I was quite prepared," and here she glanced disdainfully at her husband, "to find no one here to meet us, which makes your coming all the more marked and appreciable."

"I feel highly flattered," replied Trollys, gravely, "and you may rest assured of my being ever ready to be of service to you, Mrs. Carr."

"What's the feeling here about us ? Your letter to Captain Carr taught us in part what to expect, but I mean what are they going to do ? give us the cold shoulder altogether ?"

"It is hard for me to say exactly," replied Trollys, hesitatingly, "I am not in their confidence and can only surmise as to what the feeling is."

"Oh ! you are an outcast too, are you ?" exclaimed Norah, brightening up, and in shifting her position exposing to view one handsome foot elegantly attired. "Come, I like you all the better for this, so they look on you as a Bohemian too, do they ? I heard you are not very good, but have you been doing anything very outrageous to cause this assembly of saints to put you out too ?"

Trollys laughed ; he knew by this time the kind of woman he had to deal with. The shallow selfish nature had shown itself only too soon, and this experienced man of the world read Norah Carr's character to the letter, and he moulded his conversation with her accordingly.

"Well, I don't know," he said, "we are all mortal, Mrs. Carr, but the people here consider themselves a cut above the ordinary mortal ; sort of cross between man and angel, don't you know ? I, not having the advantage of the cross-breed, am supposed to be a step lower than these angels ; therefore my words, works and actions, I presume, have to their thinking a soupçon of wickedness which does not go down with them."

"But which make us all the faster friends," she exclaimed, gaily. "George," she continued, addressing her husband who stood moodily by, "I mean to make an ally of Captain Trollys, I don't care a fig if the people intend to punish me through you. As long as I have an agreeable cavalier to ride about with, I don't care that for the others," and she snapped her pretty fingers scornfully in her husband's face.

"I hope for your sake, Norah, you will not be reduced to the society of one gentleman alone ; you may think to the contrary now ; but if the society of the place don't take notice of you, you will find it very unpleasant," remarked Carr, gravely.

"But, my dear lady," remonstrated Trollys, "you are

jumping at conclusions ; it may not be so bad after all. The people may not show themselves so very undesirable, and I am sure if you played your cards well, you—”

“Cow Tow to them and court them, suck up to them, I suppose you mean!” interrupted Norah, angrily, her eyes flashing and magnificent bosom heaving. “No! I’d rather die than do that; if it’s to be Greek meet Greek, let it be war to the knife then, I’ll not budge an inch, and I shall pay all back in the same coin as I receive. But you’ll stick to us, won’t you? to me then if my husband won’t have you?” and she laid her fair jewelled hand on his arm and looked up into his face.

“Like wax,” promptly replied Trollys. But there’s your dooly, the camels have been here since yesterday ready to stalk off with your *samaan*.”

“What do you call a dooly?”

“That oblong canvas thing with a pole protruding from each end; up on the bank there.”

“And how does it go? on wheels? I don’t see any.”

“On wheels? No!” laughed Trollys. “Those fellows you see grouped about the machine will carry you in it on their shoulders.”

“Absurd!” exclaimed Norah, “and how are you two coming?”

“Oh, we’ll ride, my second horse is here for your husband and we will keep pace with you and take care of you generally.”

In due course the procession was formed. Norah, after a deal of laughing, shared in by her escort, settled herself comfortably in the dooly, which the Kohars, lifting on their shoulders, trudged off merrily with. The two officers mounting their horses rode after, while a native non-commissioned officer of the corps busied himself in getting the camels loaded with the heavy baggage.

“Well, Carr,” said Trollys, “welcome back to India and to the Regiment. You’ll find it hum-drum enough though, I expect, after all the fun and fancy of a spell at home. I know I felt it so after my late leave.”

“Aye, but after all there’s nothing like being in harness.”

“Right, but this time you will be in double harness,” laughed Trollys. “I hope you settled your business satisfactorily?”

"What business?"

"Why, the business that called you home."

"Oh, ah that; yes, thanks, that's all done, gives me between four and five hundred a year."

"Bravo! I congratulate you, comes in opportune, now you've taken a wife. How does matrimony agree with you?"

"As it does with most people, I expect," said Carr, evasively.

"How's the Regiment, any new faces?"

"None, you'll find all that sort of thing pretty much in *statu quo*."

"How's Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"Confound her, she's blooming enough, got two or three inches larger round the chest since you last saw her, I expect; otherwise she's the same."

"You don't like her," remarked Carr, smiling.

"I hate her," exclaimed Trollys, angrily.

"You won't see she behaved handsomely to you when you were in a mess about her maid."

"No!"

After this the conversation between the two officers flagged. The sun had become very powerful, the Kohars had put on a spurt, and the horsemen had to resort to that disagreeable half-trot half-walk to enable them to keep proper pace with the dooly. Carr, lost in his own unpleasant reflections, sat his saddle with head bent and shoulders drooped, not at all in keeping with his generally dashing appearance when on horseback. Trollys was deep in thought as well. Carr's evasive reply to his question as to his experiences, pleasant or otherwise, of his short married life, coupled with what Norah had said on the steamer deck, gave him sufficient material to make a pretty shrewd guess as to the state of affairs between this man and wife. He had perceived, moreover, that Norah was fascinatingly beautiful just in accordance with his tastes. He already knew she was shallow, vain, and very open to flattery. He was pleased with her expressed determination to make an ally of him. His experience in woman's foibles and weaknesses pointed out this one to be made of material sufficiently pliant and ductile to

suit his aims and ends, and there and then after not more than an hour's acquaintance, had he marked her down for his game. Already had his busy brain been plotting for his pleasure and her ruin, and his heart leaped within him at the contemplation of the possibility of achieving so magnificent a conquest.

In due time they arrived, at the commencement of Khalsapore. The road improved; huts, with here and there a native shop, then more huts and a regular bazaar. Enclosures with bungalows peeping out from amid the trees were now passed. Then came the Quarter Guard of the Irregulars, and the sowars clattered out to salute their officers as they rode by. Then more bungalows, then the Church, and, at last after turning the corner, the Carrs' house, which Trollys' servants had swept and garnished and where breakfast had been prepared for the travellers. Thus did George Carr and his wife arrive at their destination.

CHAPTER XI.

George Carr meets his Colonel—The Orderly Room of the Irregulars—Some Orderly Room items—A painful interview—The iron already entering.

"Is the Colonel very angry?" asked Carr of Major Doyle the next morning at Orderly Room, whither he had gone to report his arrival officially.

"How can you expect him to be otherwise, Carr," answered Major Doyle, stiffly, pacing up and down the verandah, on the look-out for the Commanding Officer.

"I did it for the best," replied the other, despondingly. "I did not believe we would be happy. Don't you think he will listen to me?"

"Don't know," said Major Doyle, dryly.

"I beg to report my return to duty, Sir," said Captain Carr, advancing and saluting the Colonel.

"Very good, Sir," replied Fosbrooke, frigidly, and returning the salute. "Aha, Henniker," he continued, as his Adjutant came up to him, "lots to get through to-day, eh?"

"Not much, Sir. The batch of Pathan recruits are up for inspection and you have to settle that Ghilzie affair."

"Oh, you mean the quarrel between the Wurrdy Major and what's his name?"

"Ressaldar Sher Bâz Khan, Sir."

"Oh ah, yes, and what else?"

"The Party from Jan Khan Kote have come in, Sir; they arrived last night, and the Ressaldar, old Elahi Bukkus, a favourite of yours by the way, has to complain of inhospitality experienced at the hands of the Lâsari Beloochees while the Party halted at Nawaz Khan ka Tunda."

"That beggar Shah Dad Khan again, eh?"

"I expect so, Sir, it will be a case for you to lay before Mr. Dalrymple, I think."

"How are you, Doyle? Gentlemen, good morning all," exclaimed the Colonel, now entering the Orderly Room while all his officers rose.

Carr having nothing regimentally official to transact, remained in the ante-room, determined to waylay the Colonel and have a private conversation with him. He dreaded this ordeal most of all, and was morbidly anxious to have it over, so he sent in a pencil note to Henniker, asking him to make known his wish to his Commanding Officer; Henniker's answer was "salaams."

The Recruits were duly inspected, fine fair-haired fellows from across the Border, seeking service under the British Flag and serving it loyally (as after events proved) even against their own kith and kin.

The Wurrdy Major, a sort of Superintendent of Regimental kit, and Sher Bâz Khan were confronted. Unlike the natives of India, these men, both Afghans, disdained to stoop to

untruth. The insult was proved and not denied, the provocation was brought home to the offender, who admitted it frankly. The men were reasoned with, and in a manner quite smacking of Western bluntness, they clasped hands over it and promised to quarrel no more, but every one who saw the glitter in the blue eyes of the one and black orbs of the other, knew full well that once these men met over the Border the feud would break out afresh, only to be quenched in the blood of one or another of them. Then old Elahi Bukkus, one of the few Hindoostanis in the corps, and hailing from Fyzabad, told how when he and his Party arrived late one evening at the embattled gate of the village of Nawaz Khan ka Tunda, where the redoubtable Belooch Chief, old Shah Dad Khan, lived like a feudal knight of old, admittance was refused them, although asked for in the name of God and the Queen. How on reiterating their demand for shelter and fodder, both of which would be paid for, the low walls were manned by long-haired Lâsaris with matchlock in hand who warned the gallant sowars to move off; whereupon Elahi Bukkus experienced the utmost difficulty in restraining his fiery troopers, who were for attacking the village, and thus creating a breach of that armed peace then existing between the Sirkar and these wild border tribes. Elahi Bukkus particularly brought to notice the turbulent conduct of one of his troopers, a young Sikh from Loodhiana, named Koshial Singh, who, riding up to the low parapet as the Party moved off, removed with the point of his sabre the puggree of the chief man on the wall, which act was all but bringing down a hail of Jezzails on the retreating Party, but which was happily averted by Elahi Bukkus himself making the sign of peace and trotting back to the wall with the puggree on the point of his own sabre and restoring it to the exasperated owner. Koshial Singh was called up and reproved for his conduct, but he and every one there saw that the European officers admired the lad's rash gallantry in braving the fire of the Jezzails with such *sang-froid*. And so the business of the morning ended.

"Carr wishes to speak to you, Sir," remarked Henniker, as the Colonel was preparing to depart. "Will you see him?"

A change came over the frank kindly face, "yes," he said.
 "Will you, gentlemen, kindly withdraw?"

All rose and retired, and Carr entered.

"Well, Sir," said Colonel Fosbrooke, in an icy tone, "what is your business with me?"

"I have no business with you, Sir, I crave a few minutes' conversation. Colonel Fosbrooke, apart from your being my Commanding Officer, I look on you as an old and valued friend, and I am deeply grieved to find you are offended with me."

"Would you have me otherwise, Sir, considering the nature of the insult and injury you have worked on me and my daughter? Why God's death man, are you aware you are a perjured villain and looked on as such by all right-thinking men?"

"I don't endeavour to palliate the fact of my having broken faith with Miss Fosbrooke, Sir. I was acting under conviction, but that in no way tends to mitigate the sense of injury you and your daughter must naturally be smarting under."

"Well, Sir, admitting thus much, what more can you possibly have to say to me on this or any other subject?"

"I implore your forgiveness, Colonel Fosbrooke! yours, and that of your daughter."

"Never, Sir! never!" exclaimed the Colonel, furiously, "my forgiveness is the last thing I would accord you."

"And Miss Fosbrooke, Sir?"

"I am astonished at your audacity in even mentioning her name, Sir. I decline to have further words with you; good morning to you, Sir!"

"One word more, Colonel Fosbrooke, and I shall have done. My wife will be placed in a very false position. All hostility shewn me will redound on her. We have to a great extent been prepared to expect an unpleasant reception, but I fondly hoped that you and Miss Fosbrooke, the most injured parties though you are, would have been merciful, and forgiven the past, especially now when I find out my mistake and humble myself before you."

"Your wife took you, I presume, for better, for worse; she must stand or fall with you; it is one of the exigencies of

matrimony, and can't be shirked. As for your regretting the step you have taken, any such sentiments can in no way concern or influence me in my future attitude towards you, and I tell you, you are but wasting breath in endeavouring to shake me in my resolution. The door, Sir, I repeat."

"I implore you, Colonel Fosbrooke, to forgive me," and with the words, Carr went down on his knees. "Our life will be made miserable if we are looked askance at by every one. If you would, in charity, set the example of forgiveness, the others would soon come round. If it will be a satisfaction to you to know it, learn that I already find my wife ill-tempered and discontented. She is naturally indignant that people here don't intend to receive her with cordiality, and she will not understand that, as my wife, she must suffer for aught I have done. I beg therefore and entreat of you, Sir, be lenient, be kind, don't make my life more miserable than it is," and George Carr looked imploringly into the elder man's stern and uncompromising face.

"The door, Sir! the door," was Colonel Fosbrooke's stern reply; "if you don't leave the room, I shall."

Carr seeing the futility of further entreaty, rose to his feet and, bowing gravely, left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

Calling hours—The tame cat business begins—Noral's first experiences of Khalsapore Society.

"What are the calling rules in India, Captain Trollys?"

"Well, I'm a very bad hand to ask such a question of, Mrs. Carr; the rules differ in every Presidency and Province for the matter of that. I have served all over the shop, and the various *mámools* have got so jumbled up in my head, that for the life of me I cannot tell you what rule is applicable to yourselves, but Carr must surely know, you had better ask him when he comes in."

"I bet you I wont."

"What will you bet me?"

"What would you like me to bet you?"

"Something worth having of course."

"What would that be?"

"Shall I tell you?" he whispered, gazing passionately at her.

"No, you had better not, but sit here and fan me instead."

The above dialogue took place a few mornings subsequent to the Carrs' arrival at Khalsapore. It was *chota hazri* time. George Carr had gone out on duty, and Trollys, true to the instincts of that insidious animal, the tame cat, had strolled over to keep Norah company. She had passed the last few days in fretting and fuming, in quarrelling generally with her husband, bewailing her lot, and reproaching him under every possible pretext. Carr had told her of the unsuccessful issue of his interview with Colonel Fosbrooke, which proved a signal for a greater than ever display of temper on his wife's part. She had unceasingly urged him to make a round of visits, but his answer always was, that she, as a Bride and new arrival, was entitled to be visited first by the residents. Day after day then had Norah sat in state in her pretty Drawing Room, and ravishingly dressed, on the look-out for visitors who never came. Carr had not spoken the truth when he told her that people would call on her first; he knew that the contrary rule existed, but he had done this to get out of the ordeal. The rebuff he had met with at his Colonel's hands, and the marked coolness of his brother officers in their dealings with him even on official meetings and matters, had completely cowed him, and he dreaded the bare idea of going round with his wife to house after house, only to be refused admission at each. This state of affairs was becoming unbearable to Norah, and she had made up her mind this morning to take the initiative by going on a round of visits and learning the worst.

"But don't you know really, Captain Trollys? What on earth are you staring at so intently? is it a cockroach?"

"Heaven forbid! I was admiring your foot, and was trying to recollect if I had ever seen prettier."

Norah, whether knowingly or otherwise, had thrust forward one of her feet where it lay, daintily clad in open-worked black silk hose and a bronze shoe, all too exposed to the enraptured gaze of her companion.

"Well, I hope you are edified," she laughed, half rising and drawing her foot beneath her dress. "Do you like women to have good feet?"

"Good feet? yes, but your's, Mrs. Carr, are more than good, they are superb, I would kiss the very ground they tread on."

"Humbug!" she said, smiling on him, "but come to the point, what about this calling affair, can't you advise me?"

"Indeed, I can't; but there goes Molehampton on that Rosinante of his, I'll run out and ask him if you like."

He returned in a few minutes. "You call on the people," he said, re-seating himself by her side and taking her fan from her, "Molehampton says 'tis the rule of the place."

"But a Bride?"

"A Bride also, even such a transcendantly lovely one as you are; I put it as a Bride's case, and he said it does not matter. If the Bride is a new arrival she must go round."

"I am so glad," she exclaimed, "very likely they have been wondering all this time why I have not called."

Carr came in at this juncture. He was riding, so Trollys had warning of his approach to move away from his hitherto close proximity to Norah.

"George," she said, "you have all along been wrong. Mr. Molehampton says we should call first. We must go round after breakfast."

Her husband feigned ignorance of the rules, and with a heavy heart was obliged to acquiesce to his wife's plans.

"Where shall we go to first, George?" asked Norah, in a better humour than she had been for some days past, seating herself by her husband's side in their new wagonette, and looking divinely, regally handsome.

"The Cheynes are the senior people, we must go there first."

Much to Captain Carr's astonishment, it was not a

case of "*Durwaza 'bund*," and he and his wife found themselves in the shaded Drawing Room. Mrs. Cheyne was coldly polite to Carr, and a little less unbending to Norah. The usual stereotyped questions were asked as to how they had fared on the voyage, and so forth, and the usual small talk followed. Norah, espying the piano, expressed wonderment at the presence of the instrument in such an out-of-the-way corner of the world, and asked how it stood the climate. On this, Aggie Cheyne enquired if she played and sang, and on receiving an affirmative answer, the three ladies became slightly less reserved in comparing notes on music generally. Colonel Cheyne exchanged a few common-place sentences with Carr on the state of feeling against us in Afghanistan, and the probabilities of a rupture with that country. Then Norah rose and, shaking hands with Mrs. Cheyne and her daughter, took the Colonel's arm to her carriage and drove off. "Cool and distant, all of them," she remarked to her husband, "where to now?"

"By rights it should be to our Colonel, but we wont trouble him just yet," he replied, in a poor attempt at gaiety, "so 'I'm driving to the Dalrymples.'"

"Who are they?"

"He's the civilian of the place, a great swell. She's supposed to be the leading lady. She used to be very nice and always kind to me."

"Why wont she be so now?"

"I don't know, Norah," replied her husband, sighing. "Things seem to have changed since I was last here. But here you are."

Again it was "Come in," and in they went. Clara received her visitors with courtesy, nothing more. She was struck with Carr's dejected appearance, and remarked on his not looking well. Mr. Dalrymple, careless of the prevailing feeling against this couple, entered into a lively conversation with Norah, who charmed him with her brilliant powers of small talk and dazzled him with her fresh beauty, but Clara was very reserved and spoke on nothing but the most common-place subjects.

"I see you are musical, Mrs. Dalrymple," remarked Norah,

noticing the various instruments in the room. "For my part I am very fond of music, and shall not cease worrying my husband till he gets me a piano, until which, I shall rust for want of practice." This was a broad hint, the second she had given that day. Poor Norah! but Mrs. Dalrymple bent her stately head and said nothing. After this failure there was no use remaining any longer, so they left.

"Great fat thing," exclaimed Norah, as soon as they were out of ear-shot, "what is there to admire in her, I should like to know: where are we going now?"

"Here, into this next house, the Thorowbads."

Mrs. Thorowbad, imbued with the common prejudice existing against this unfortunate pair, tried to be very stiff and formal, but she, good creature, soon thawed under the influence of Norah's beauty and low sweet voice, and was soon pouring into that lady's ear a catalogue of her domestic woes. She did not know what to do about her three younger girls' education. She would not part with them, nor would she leave her husband, who had no furlough due. Governesses were an impossibility at Khalsapore, and the girls were forgetting all their music. Again, the last mail brought intelligence of Annie, her eldest, having had a slight attack of small-pox, and Mrs. Thorowbad was in a great state lest the disease had pitted her girl's face, and so on. Norah listened, sympathized and suggested, and quite won the good lady's heart by offering to give her little girls lessons in music. And then the visitors left. The Doyles were the next. Major Doyle did not show, and Mrs. Doyle was as stiff as could be, which so incensed Norah that she brought her visit to an abrupt termination. "Serve her out, the cat," she muttered, sailing out of the room, and climbing her wagonette. The Molehamptons were the last for that day. A Padre and a Padre's wife are not supposed to be subject to any of the world's uncharitableness, and the Carrs found them by far the pleasantest people they had that day visited.

"Well, Carr," said Mr. Molehampton, when at the termination of the visit the two gentlemen followed the ladies who went out in conversation, "I had hoped to tie your knot for you. I trust you are as happy as could be wished."

"I did it for the best, Mr. Molehampton, fearing incompatibility of temper and tastes between Miss Fosbrooke and myself. It was not so very heinous a crime for me to go with my convictions and avoid risking a life-long misery, but, judging from the reception of us here, one would think I had been guilty of something very outrageous."

"My friend," replied the clergyman, shaking his head gravely, "what you have done can't be forgiven and forgotten in a day. The wound is yet fresh. Let us hope that Time, the healer, with the grace of God, will temper people's present resentment against you, and bring things round to a happier state soon."

CHAPTER XIII.

Spirits still impervious—Mutual recrimination—An open breach—Trollys the comforter—The first fatal downward step.

The Carrs' visits were returned in due course and then there came a lull.

In the meantime, things were far from progressing satisfactorily. Between Norah and her husband there existed a sulky truce, that would often burst forth into one of those domestic "scenes," which form the most painful episodes in married life. There was no love between these two. He, smarting under the treatment he was undergoing at the hands of his fellow-men, and daily becoming more and more dissatisfied with his wife's behaviour, would seclude himself on his side of the house, smoking and drinking deeply. He cared not to go over to the Mess, for he knew a cool welcome, at the best, awaited him among his brother officers; he had grown to attribute all his present misery to his wife. He considered her as the root of all this evil, and an unceasing regret at the step he had taken eat like a canker into his soul, causing him to curse God, curse his wife, curse his fate, curse all and everything about him, and seek solace and oblivion in the bottle. He drank very heavily during these days, and was rarely seen outside his rooms. Norah, on her part, had grown daily more indifferent to her husband.

Unless at high words with him, she scarcely, if ever, addressed him. She was very sore and angry at the attitude of the Khalsapore society towards herself, and, in her turn, was ever ready to saddle the odium of it all on her husband. Day after day passed and there came no invitations to Lawn Tennis, or any of the dinners and parties that took place from time to time. Hearing that the Post Office was a general rendezvous, especially on mail days, Norah rode there with a view of meeting people, but after one or two attempts she gave it up in disgust. True, her bows were returned, and civil but uncompromisingly cold replies met all her attempts at conversation; she could get no more out of them, and the poor girl, on returning home after these rebuffs, would indulge in passionate crying which, rather than having the effect of soothing her, tended to make her more determined in her resolution to throw all discretion to the winds and "gang her ain gait."

All this time Trollys was her constant companion. Isolated as she was from every one, even from her husband except during meals, this man's society was very acceptable to her. He had insidiously made immense strides in her good books, a familiarity existed between them now that predicted ruin and disgrace to be not far distant. She rode out regularly morning and evening now, and Trollys would be with her whenever he was not at parade or drill. Men returning from snipe-shooting or morning gallops would come across these two riding along side by side in the most unlikely places. At the band he would be with her, at church he walked in after her, he carrying her books, fan and smelling-bottle in the most matter-of-fact way. People had long ago began to talk, but an impetus was given to their tongues by the following incident. Norah and Trollys had been out a long morning ride, and on their way home the lady proposed calling in at the Library for some books. Arrived under the porch, Trollys dismounted and, hitching his bridle over a post, he took his stand by Norah's horse and receiving her in his arms as she left the saddle, held her form in his embrace for some seconds before putting her on her feet. The room happened to be full of people all busy reading the papers, but they

had eyes, and of course the names of Mrs. Carr and Captain Trollys were always uttered in couples from that day forth.

"How long is this to last?" she angrily asked her husband one day, finding herself alone with him after breakfast.

"Is what to last?"

"Why this one tissue of rebuff and insult that I receive from your friends."

"Don't call them my friends, if you please; they are no more my friends now than they are your's."

"Which means, I suppose," she furiously exclaimed, "that they were your friends before your marriage."

"Exactly, if you will have an unpalatable truth, there is one for you."

"And you blame me for the present state of affairs?"

"I blame you and my own folly in marrying you."

"I agree with you there entirely, you were very foolish, but I was just as great a fool as you, for my short married life has been nothing but misery from beginning to end."

"What! even when you have Trollys dancing attendance on you, morning, noon, and, I was almost going to say, night."

"How do you mean dancing attendance on me?"

"Nothing more or less than what the words convey. I tell you what it is, Mrs. Carr," he continued, rising from his chair and standing before her, "that man is too often here and his domestication in this house must cease."

She stared at him and then broke into a satirical laugh, "Oh rich! that's how the land lies, is it? So you are jealous, are you? Come, we are going ahead; we took to quarrelling fast enough and now its jealousy, is it?"

"You may call it what you like, madame, but I won't have that man so constantly in my house, it is scandalous."

"Pray, Captain Carr," she answered, rising and standing with her arms akimbo confronting him and looking at him in a provoking manner peculiar to women in certain moods, "Pray how much of your delightful society do you honor me with, and how much of the society of your friends do I enjoy to render me careless and inappreciative of the companionship of one congenial spirit?"

"You consider Captain Trollys a congenial spirit, do you?"

"Most decidedly I do! Our ideas on most subjects are identical and we get on very well together, besides he does not drink as you do. Yes, I like Captain Trollys very much. There!"

"Then God help you, madame, if sympathy of feeling exists between you and Captain Trollys on any one point."

"Hah! hah! jealousy again," she laughed merrily, "and does he feel very outraged, the poor fellow?" she continued in mock commiseration, stroking him down with her fan.

This was too much. Carr, worked up to the boiling point by her intensely provoking and irritating manner, snatched the fan from her hand and, smashing it in two, hurled it to the other end of the room. "Take care, madame," he hissed, "you don't goad me into doing the same to you."

"Oh its war to the knife, is it? Very good, sir," she said, in low measured tones, fearlessly meeting her husband's scowl, "very good, but don't think you are going to bully and ride the high horse with me. I tell you now that I will *not* be deprived of Captain Trollys' society, and the best thing I think you and I had better do is to live apart till you come to your senses."

"I shall forbid Trollys the house," foamed Carr.

"I dare you to do it."

"Dare me?"

"Yes, you drunken brute!" and she lost all command over herself, "say one word to him, and I will go straight over to Colonel Fosbrooke and tell him and the whole world, in fact, of the sottish life you are leading, and let it be known that the constant "touches of fever" which prevent you from attending to your duties are nothing more than so many instances of your being in an intoxicated state, and that in some sober moment you wrote a lot of chits telling of your so-called fever, which you date and send over to the doctor as occasion requires. I am not so powerless as you think, so there!"

"How do you know this?" asked Carr, turning pale.

"Know it? Why, have I not been in this house more than two months, and has scarcely a day passed without your

drinking yourself into a beastly state of intoxication ? How do I know, forsooth !”

“ I mean about the chits.”

“ I saw them on your writing table and took possession of them, foretelling that things would come to this pass between us, I knew they would be a weapon in my hands.”

“ To what purpose ?”

“ To wield against you should necessity arise.”

“ Give them up instantly, madame.”

“ I wont !”

He sprang forward and seized her wrist, “ will you give them up ?” he hissed, twisting her arm in his powerful grasp.

“ Coward !” she gasped, struggling to free herself. “ No ! I wont give them up.”

“ I will make you give them up,” he exclaimed, in a tone of concentrated fury and, catching her other wrist, he wrenched her down on her knees. Powerful young woman though she was, her strength seemed nothing compared to his. “ Will you give up those papers ?”

“ No.”

“ Vile termagent !” and, blinded with rage and forgetting his honor and his manhood, he smote his wife right and left with clenched hands on both ears !

She stood it bravely enough, but after all she was only a woman, and the blows were cruel. “ Coward ! poltroon !” she sobbed, for the unaccustomed punishment had brought tears to her eyes, “ kick me now, murder me even, you can’t do much worse than you have done already.”

It is impossible to say to what extremities the infuriated man might have proceeded, but just at this juncture Trollys appeared on the scene.

“ Good God !” he exclaimed, in horror and astonishment. “ What is the matter ? Carr, what is all this ? your wife on her knees, you holding her down ! her ears crimson ! Good God, you ”—

“ It means she’s a wretch !” exclaimed Carr, and, flinging his wife from him, he strode from the room, banging the door after him.

"Mrs. Carr? Norah?" continued Trollys, addressing himself to her, and lifting the superb form on to a chair, "what on earth has happened?"

"Only a split, and no mistake this time. Fred," she continued, "we'll be faster friends than ever now. I got these blows for your sake, dear. He insisted on forbidding you the house, but I've gained the day, and I'll tell you all about it some other time."

She had never called him by his christian name yet. She was but a woman. Trollys, who had never beheld such a scene before, was genuine and honest in his sympathy, and which acted so powerfully on her overworked feelings, that when the reaction came on, she flung herself on this man's bosom in a flood of tears and strained him to her breast with her bare arms round his neck.

CHAPTER XIV.

Servants' espionage—How gup gets about out here—Eva's errand of mercy—Tame cat again—George promises to reform—Norah's stipulations—A patched up truce.

Gentle reader, you, who have been, or are sojourning, in this land of fond delusions, well know how incidents, such as described in my last chapter, "get about." We live out here under a system of espionage, compared with which, the spy organization of the star chamber and then the Bastille are as child's play. Our servants know every thing and all about us. All our words and works are familiar to them. Though in those northern parts they don't speak our tongue, yet, while sojourning among them I found by actual proof and trial that khansamah Peer Bukkus, khidmutgar Alum Khan, bobberchee Panchoo and Ayah Zeinâb know what we talk about and do, quite as well as the Butler Manuel, the Maty Maduray, the Cook Francis and the Ayah Sarah of my own more Christianised Presidency. "Bother those fellows King and King," you casually remark to your wife at breakfast, referring to some neglect or want of complaisance on the part of your agents: within five minutes, your whole household know that some one has not "sent money." "My love, don't you think we might give a

"return feed," says your wife to you in the hearing of the ayah. Before you have well digested the question, your servants are speculating as to the number of guests to be bidden. The doctor pays a visit out of the usual. A tonce your domestics smell a rat. You are either going home or your wife is going to the Hills, and so on. "Save me from my friends, quotha!" In India it is a case of "save me from my servants," with a vengeance and no mistake.

The scene in the Carrs' house which had been witnessed by several of the Carrs' household, took no great space of time therefore in travelling the length and breadth of the station, and thus it came to pass that the affair reached the ears of Eva Fosbrooke through the medium of her ayah, who narrated the incident with any amount of "gout;" for what is sweeter to the Indian native-domestic mind than a nice little tit-bit of gossip, regarding their white masters and mistresses? Eva, gentle forgiving Eva, had heard of and noticed with pain the almost total coventry to which the Carrs had been consigned by the Khalsapore people. She knew, moreover, that the husband and wife were at variance, but had no idea that the demon of discord, mutual hate, and aversion reigned paramount in their home. When therefore she heard of the fracas, and how George Carr had actually raised his hand against his wife, her soul went out to Norah, and she at once formed the resolution of going over in person to try and make peace between them. With this intent, therefore, we find her pulling up her horse at the Carrs a few mornings after the quarrel. Beyond passing Norah during the evening drive or morning ride, she was a stranger. On George Carr she had not set eyes since that now-far-away day when he left her for England with a kiss on her lips. She was considerably surprised when Trollys came out to her, and offered to assist her in alighting. "I came to see the Carrs," she said, looking down at Trollys dubiously.

"Mrs. Carr is in, Miss Fosbrooke, and I dare say will be delighted to see you," replied Trollys. "I'll go in and tell her."

He spoke with an air of proprietorship, and more like the master of the house, that appeared strange and distasteful to

Eva who, taking advantage of his momentary absence, sidled her horse close to the steps and dismounted. Norah, attired in an elegant dishabille, was at *chota haziri* with Trollys when Eva came, and she learnt nothing from him beyond that the young lady was there. Uncertain therefore of the object of the visit, Mrs. Carr sailed out into the verandah where Eva stood, skirt and whip in hand. Norah felt very sore against this girl, upon whom (womanlike) she looked in the light of a rival, though God knows she was already sufficiently disgusted with the prize she had gained to feel exultation in her victory. She remembered however that it was out of sympathy and affection for Eva Fosbrooke that all the ladies at Khalsapore treated her with such studied coldness and reserve. So it was with no conciliatory feelings that Norah met Eva for the first time, and she barely touched our heroine's gauntleted hand which she held out to her. "I have come over to see you, Mrs. Carr," murmured Eva, confusedly, losing courage under the stern enquiring glance of the black-browed beauty.

"So I perceive, Miss Fosbrooke, for I believe you are Miss Fosbrooke," Eva bowed.

"If we could be alone," she said, glancing hesitatingly at Trollys, who clung to Norah's skirt, so to speak.

"Go, Fred," said Mrs. Carr, and Trollys disappeared. "Now, Miss Fosbrooke," she added, seating herself on a sofa by Eva's side, "what can you possibly have to say to me?"

"I come in a friendly spirit, dear Mrs. Carr," began Eva, nervously, "and I hope you will look on me as a friend."

"Willingly," replied Norah, lightly, "but what has actuated your coming to see me when I, by rights, should have called on you? the reason which prevented me from doing which is needless to tell you."

"Believe me, I bear you no malice or ill-will for the past. Had I my own way, things would never have been so unpleasant for you as they unhappily appear to be. I have my father to obey and the public opinion has been too strong for me. Will you believe me when I tell you I have kept away from you unwillingly hitherto?"

"Then why come now?" asked Norah.

"Because I heard that you and your husband are on terms of estrangement owing to some difference, and I came with a view of making peace between you," and the earnest eyes filled with tears and the low sweet voice trembled.

"Things have gone too far between us, Miss Fosbrooke," replied Norah haughtily, "for any thing but a hollow truce, if truce it is to be. Besides, I am just as content with things as they are; I shall gain nothing by being on good terms with Captain Carr again."

"Oh, do not say so," pleaded Eva, "forget and forgive before it is too late and your hearts become steeled against each other. Bear with him and he will forbear. Remember the vows you uttered at God's altar only a few short months ago, and think that in all probability you both have long years of life before you, and what a never-ceasing regret it will be for you if you allow things to go too far and reconciliation is impossible."

"There is the Divorce Court," exclaimed Mrs. Carr, "and my husband has done quite enough to give me a good case."

"You surely would not proceed to such extremities!" said Eva, with astonishment.

"Indeed, I would: do you know that he is a drunkard, and that now having raised his hand against me and in the presence of witnesses, the law would relieve me of him to-morrow?"

"Oh, pray don't think of such a thing. Pause before taking such a step. I know Captain Carr is impetuous and hot-tempered, but he does not deserve his life to be shipwrecked, as it most assuredly will be if you carry out your threat. Remember, we are all weak, all sinful. We don't know when we ourselves may sin. Promise me," and here she took Norah's bejewelled hand, "promise me, dear Mrs. Carr, you will try to forget and forgive."

"What a pleading little thing it is!" said Norah, in that half-laugh, half-cry state peculiar to our women, when their feelings strongly worked on, causes them to be hysterically inclined. "You must have an awfully good heart to interest yourself in the man who has jilted you and the woman who supplanted you."

"Pray, say nothing about that, I have conquered all my feelings in that respect long ago, and only want to see you both on good terms again. Where is your husband, may I see him?"

"My dear child," said Norah, drawing Eva to her and kissing her, "you are an angel of goodness far too pure for such as me. Captain Carr will be returning from parade shortly, speak to him if you will. You have influenced me sufficiently not to refuse crying peace if he will."

Eva's reply was to throw her arms round Norah's queenly neck and kiss her.

In due time George Carr came clattering in. His astonishment was great when, on entering the house, Eva rose and came towards him as his wife left the room. They had a long conversation together, during which Eva elicited a promise from her quondam lover to be more temperate in his habits in future. "You know," she said, smiling sadly and sweetly on him, "that this was one of the subjects I used to 'preach' to you about in the days never to come again. You used to wince under my advice, but now having seen the evil and misery the habit entails, promise me you will avoid it for the future."

And he promised: taking her hand, he raised it to his lips and swore he would eschew the evil from that time forth for evermore.

Eva now went to Mrs. Carr. "I have had a long talk with your husband, and am glad to say have gained a great point. The root of all this evil lies, I'm sure, in his intemperance. I have made him promise to shun it for the future. He is ready to apologize to you for his conduct of the other morning, but he says you provoked him to do it by not giving up some papers of which you had taken possession. In return for what he has conceded, I think you ought to surrender them. Will you do so?"

"Do you think he is earnest in his resolution to leave off drinking?"

"I think so, I sincerely hope so."

"But there is another point I must settle with him before giving up those papers."

"What is that?"

"He must not object to Captain Trollys' visits."

"Ah, yes," murmured Eva, sadly, "that's another thing. But, dear Mrs. Carr, do you think it is right for Captain Trollys to be so constantly with you?"

"So he has been telling you of that also, has he? Look here, Miss Fosbrooke, I am a gay light-hearted woman, fond of society and amusement. I leave England to accompany my husband to this country. Instead of being cordially received and having a happy prospect before me, I find myself shunned on all sides, kept rigidly at a distance, and all my advances met with coolness and insolence. What have I done? Wherein am I to blame? Captain Carr never told me of his previous engagement to you before our marriage, and even when he did tell me about it subsequently, I never anticipated that the fact would cause people to make our lives burdens to us. I am treated with contumely on all sides; for what? for nothing which my conscience accuses me. One man however is an exception. He is friendly, civil and courteous, very accomplished and well read. My husband is no congenial spirit, but just the reverse. What do you expect? that I should shut the door on the only companion I have; say to him, 'look here, you come too often and my husband objects to your frequent visits?' Would I be human to say this? No! If Captain Carr wishes us to make up this quarrel, all well and good, but it must be coupled with a promise on his part not to interfere between Captain Trollys and me."

Eva sighed. Guileless as she was, still her experience of the world taught her that Norah Carr erred in being so intimate with this fascinating young officer. She had heard from time to time people talk of him in no flattering terms, and she gathered enough to understand that Captain Trollys' moral character was not of the highest standard. Had she not also heard Norah call him by his christian name, and was not this alone sufficient to show that all was not right and proper?

"Your husband dwelt on this point very particularly," she said. "Besides, Mrs. Carr, I have made up my mind to endeavour

to make things more pleasant for you. I am going to speak to Mr. Molehampton about it, and see whether we can't get people to be more cordial to you ; when you enjoy the society of the place you will care less for Captain Trollys' company."

"You are a dear thing," exclaimed Norah again, kissing Eva, "and it is very good of you interesting yourself about us ; it will be a grand thing if you knock some sense into people's heads, and life made bearable, but I am firm, dear, about Captain Trollys. I won't stand his being sent to the right-about. He has been, and is very good to me, and common gratitude, if nothing else, would prevent me from doing anything to hurt his feelings for anyone."

And so it was arranged. The husband and wife once more stood hand to hand, however impervious their spirits may have been. George Carr, having the better nature of the two, conceded the question about Trollys. "For peace sake, Norah," he said, holding his wife's hand, "I will not object to Captain Trollys' visits here, I will trust you. I only warn you against the man as I have warned you a dozen times. Forget then, dear, and forgive as I do," and he took the queenly form to his breast and kissed his wife's pale cheek. Eva stood by with tears in her eyes. "Oh, let me exhort you," she impressively said, "to be kindly affectioned one towards another. Bear with one another's infirmities, study each other's likes and dislikes, and God in His own good time will bring you peace. Captain Carr, Mrs. Carr," she continued, taking a hand of each, "remember that God gave you to one another. You are united by one of His holiest of ordinances, and being in such sacred bondage, it behoves you both to so behave as to earn your Heavenly Father's approbation and love. Be at peace, dear friends, let nothing come between you to mar your happiness and love, and when you meet those, whom I hope shortly will be your friends, let there not be a trace visible of anything but entire peace, love and confidence having ever existed between you."

George Carr, looking down on this truly good girl, literally cried, but Norah listened with a half-disdainful, half-weary

expression, and when, at Eva's bidding, the husband and wife exchanged kisses, it was easy to see that where he was imbued with good resolutions and charitable thoughts, she, on the contrary, was full of insincerity and all manner of wickedness.

Eva, as she rode home, could not but keep repeating to herself her fears that her efforts had resulted in a patched-up peace. "He is in earnest, I can see," she said to herself, "but she, I am afraid, is full of deceit and insincerity. However time will show."

CHAPTER XV.

Chance of brighter days—The Irregulars' Gymkhana day.—The Carrs join.—Our frontier sowars.—A dissertation anent fighting.

Eva's efforts on behalf of the Carrs proved successful. Time had dulled people's resentment, and when she pleaded for the unfortunate couple, she met with little or no resistance. Mr. Molehampton accompanied her in her round, and every one acquiesced.

"I have no objection, dear," said Clara Dalrymple, "provided she does not keep Captain Trollys pinned to her side. You know it has been the talk of the place."

"Oh, I hope she will behave with discretion; her own common sense should tell her it's wrong."

"Common sense, dear Eva, is a scarce commodity in these days; however we will see."

It was gymkhana day, and that evening's programme included tilting at the ring by fair equestriennes for a gold bracelet given by Colonel and Mrs. Cheyne. This tilting at the ring was a new amusement in Khalsapore. Henniker, the secretary, had been busy for some days in putting his fair pupils in the way of acquitting themselves creditably in the eyes of the Khalsapore world, both black and white, and every one was on the tiptoe of expectation. During all these days poor Henniker had been fervently worshipping at a distance. He had met Eva at several parties, and had latterly seen her every morning at the Irregulars' riding school where she, among other ladies,

practised at the ring under his guidance. His adoration was undisguised, but Eva had not yet learnt the truth. Her father's right-hand man, Henniker, met her often at her own home, where, in the course of regimental business, he was obliged to go, and where after discussing official matters with the Colonel, he would occasionally enjoy an half hour with the object of his love, passing the time in small talk, or singing to her accompaniment at the piano. Henniker, naturally bashful, found it difficult to screw himself to the pitch required for making a declaration of his worship, and in this unenviable condition we find him this evening in his Cavalry undress sitting his horse like a centaur, his jaunty red and silver lace forage cap lodged well over his left ear, moving about among the horsemen and horsewomen, a kind smile and kind word for all. This was the evening too when the Carrs were to join the other people and there was a sort of suppressed excitement mingled with curiosity prevalent, for Mrs. Carr in reply to Henniker's note of invitation had expressed her intention of appearing as a competitor. Almost all had come. Miss Fosbrooke, Mrs. and Miss Cheyne, Mrs. Dalrymple and Mrs. Doyle, in all the glory of tight-fitting habits, and jaunty terai hats were taking preliminary canters, tilting at a dummy ring, while every now and then, Henniker, to show them the way, would clatter down and carry off the trophy at the point of his lance, to the admiration of the fair competitors.

"Oh, here they come," exclaimed Eva, as the joint foot-fall of two horses assailed their ears, and in a few seconds Captain and Mrs. Carr dashed up. George bowed gravely on all sides. Norah acknowledged the many hat-liftings with queenly grace. She looked excessively handsome. Her splendid figure was displayed to the utmost advantage by her dark green riding habit fitting it like a glove, and the pert little "Billycock" hat and spotted veil through which her dark eyes flashed, and her cheeks glowed, all tended to set off her many attractions to the full.

"We are so glad you ride at the ring, Mrs. Carr," exclaimed Clara Dalrymple, edging her big Australian close to Norah's

horse and holding out her hand frankly which the other took in her's, "the prize is a magnificent one and well worth trying for."

"Well, Carr, how are you," said Colonel Cheyne, cordially, as George walked his horse towards the tent where the gentlemen were assembled imbibing whisky pegs and smoking long Trichies.

"Good evening, Colonel; good evening, gentlemen," replied Carr, dismounting and entering the tent, with his drawling Cavalry gait. "Is the competition to be confined solely to the ladies?"

"For the gold bracelet, yes," answered Fitzmaurice, squeezing Carr's hand, "but the men are going to tilt first for a prize of fifty rupees our Colonel has given."

"Where is the Colonel?"

"Out yonder with the men," and Fitzmaurice pointed to a crowd of sowars in their picturesque undress, among whom Colonel Fosbrooke was arranging preliminaries with the help of the Ressaldar-Major.

Carr lounged across towards the group. He was anxious to make his peace with Colonel Fosbrooke, and as his Commander turned towards him, grasped his hand, poor George experienced a choking sensation in his throat which he could not overcome for some seconds.

"I have been longing for this moment, sir," he was at length enabled to utter. "I trust you will allow bygones to be bygones and forgive me."

"Say no more, Carr," whispered Colonel Fosbrooke, hooking George's arm. "Let it be peace from this time forth, on all sides. You have to thank one who has your happiness very much at heart, and who has influenced us all in the business."

"I know whom you allude to, sir," murmured Carr, his heart overfull. "She is an angel of goodness, and may God ever bless her for"—

"Hush that will do," the Colonel interrupted kindly and gently, "let us all be happy."

The ladies had now dismounted, and Norah put quite at

her ease was chatting volubly with all around her. The business of the evening now commenced. The ring was erected, the course cleared, and the signal given. Sowar after sowar came thundering down the course, some successful, others just missing, while some went wide of the mark. Right gallant men these, in their picturesque native attire, and sitting their horses bravely. Here would come a swarthy Hindoostani trooper, his light yellow trowsers and stable jacket, fitting close to his slight wiry form, the beau ideal of a light horseman, his beard and whiskers curling fiercely up to his ears and his dark eyes flashing, he would urge his horse into a mad gallop and nearing the ring, with a shout of "Dheen" he would shoot past the post with the ring on the tip of his lance. The medal on this man's breast shows him to have been one of the few faithful among the many unfaithful of the Indian Mutiny. Truly must he have been a young soldier during those trying times; but there, the medal tells its own story. The bearer, Allah Ho Deen Khan, had been true to his salt, and wore his sovereign's reward on his breast in the face of all the world.

Now comes a Pathan rider, a fair-haired, blue-eyed lad, come to take service under the Flag of the Feringhee. A born horseman, he rides superbly, and, dashing at the ring, he too carries it off in gallant style. This lad, Khuda Dâd Khan, within a year of this peaceful evening, is the means of saving his European officer's life in one of the mad charges of the Afghan Campaign. He rides under our Flag, and, faithful to his oath, the young horseman wields his sabre right nobly against his own countrymen, peradventure his own kith and kin. The youthful Afridi is followed by a Sikh trooper, one of the noble Khalsa, who proved their valour on the hard-fought fields of Moodkee, Ferozeshah, and Soobraon. Narain Singh is of quite a different type from the two Moslem horsemen who preceded him. He too is fair, but with black hair and eyes, and wears a yellow caste mark on his forehead. As he charges the ring he raises his war cry of "*Sri poorakjee*," but, failing to take off the trophy, he gallops back to await his turn for another trial. Truly splendid men are these Sikhs, and

they have indeed proved a valuable acquisition to our Indian army.

Reader! it was my fate to be employed in the Abyssinian War in a civil capacity. One company of Muzbee Sikhs—the 23rd Punjaub Pioneers—was given me for a short time. Previously to their swinging into my camp—I had a camp of mine own for a long time if you please—I had had experience of Madras Sappers, Bombay Grenadiers, Beloochies, a body of dooly-bearers and a *possé* of cut-throat mule-drivers. All worked after their respective fashions, but the low caste little Muzbees were superior in every respect: docile, hard-working, obedient yet independent, these little fellows were first-rate men to handle. There was no driving, no urging. Two men were set to dig a certain hole; I offered them some advice on the task before them, whereupon both fellows, saluting respectfully, said in Punjaubee Hindoostani, “Sir, we are Pioneers, we don’t want being taught how to dig a hole.” What could I say? I was very sorry when the exigencies of the regiment rendered their recall imperative; I remember them with gratitude, and all non-combatant though I’m supposed to be, I watched the career of the gallant 23rd through the Afghan Campaigns with more than an ordinary amount of interest. Aye, indeed, I must say, but with no intent to disparage our other Native troops, that the flower of our Native army blooms in the north-west. When properly led, no troops come up to our Sikhs and Pathans. Have they not proved their worth in an hundred well-fought fields? Look at the Turks; what more splendid fighting material could be wished for? With efficient leaders, what heroism, what noble valour were they not capable of during their late awful struggle with Russia? But with an effete and effeminate leader, how quickly did the Osmanli battalions wither up and retreat before their Muscovite foe? Look yet further back. Look at the soldiers of the most warlike and gallant nation in the world, the French. Was Gravelotte won? did Metz and Strasbourg open their gates because the individual French soldier could not or would not fight? No! Their leaders were to blame. Inefficiency in the

higher ranks of the army, foppishness and effeminacy among the officers of that army brought the proud eagles of France prone to the dust, and rolled up and annihilated her regiments before an enemy, who heretofore quailed at the very name of "France." The soldier himself is a fighting unit. Place a number of fighting units together, and they become, to all intents and purposes, like a flock of sheep. They will obey the man who places himself at their head, and on him mainly depends the issue of the conflict. If he shows cowardice or incompetency, the result is disastrous, and "sauve qui pent" is the cry. On the other hand, let his followers see he is a capable leader, and they will follow him anywhere, go wherever he bids them. So it is with whole armies. If the Administration first, and the Generals second, turn out to be fools, the whole subordinate military organization is befooled and the consequences are disaster and defeat. But let Governments and leaders act with decision, promptitude and valour, the result is victory, or if not victory, at least honorable defeat. This, with us, has been a rule from time immemorial to within a few years ago. But alas! the glories of all our victories, from Crécy to Magdala, have dimmed and faded before the carnage of Isandula and Maiwand, and it is only known in Heaven when these tarnish spots will be wiped off the hitherto immaculate mirror of our military supremacy. Query? will they ever be wiped off? But this is a serious digression. Reader, pardon me.

CHAPTER XVI.

Tame cat again—Eva starts for the ring—The runaway—Norah's pluck—The race—The throw—Just in time—The declaration—The refusal—Poor Henniker.

It had now become much cooler. The sowars had finished, and it was the ladies' turn. Trollys had arrived, and took post behind Norah's chair, over which he leaned, talking to her in whispers, and quite indifferent to the many looks of disapprobation cast on him from all sides. To Norah's credit, be it said, she gave him no encouragement, and on his entering the

tent, she endeavoured by her looks to put him on his guard, but to no purpose; he confined all his attention to her, scarcely speaking a word to or bestowing a glance on any one else.

"My angel," he whispered in her ear, "how divine you are in that new habit, it looks as if it had been woven on you, every"—

"Oh, do go away," she answered, turning to him, "don't you see the goodies don't like it; you'll be undoing every thing, and I shall be sent to Coventry again; do be more guarded!" He seemed to have no thought beyond inhaling her balmy breath; as she uttered the above words, he approached his face close to hers, and was about saying something, when Norah prudently rose to her feet, remarking it was time to mount.

Trollys only did Mrs. Carr justice by his encomium on her appearance. Her riding habit really appeared as if moulded to her figure. Her glorious yet symmetrical *en bon point* was rendered so very apparent by the excellently fitting garment, that from her waist up she looked as if carved in dark marble. As she rose to her feet an irrepressible murmur of admiration escaped the lips of the assembled gentlemen, and loud enough to reach Norah's ears, for she looked round with an air of conscious triumph as, assisted by Mr. Fitzmaurice, she sprang lightly into her saddle.

"D——n the woman," muttered Trollys, under his drooping moustache, "I've been footling round her long enough and I'm d——d if I don't bring matters to an issue before long."

"Now, ladies," called out Colonel Fosbrooke, "if you'll be pleased to mount, the fun can begin."

Horses were brought round, and with the aid of the gentlemen, the fair competitors were soon in their saddles.

Eva's name was first on the list, and Henniker in a tremor of excitement trotted up to the post and took his stand opposite it. Meanwhile the ladies had ranged themselves at the other end, and the tent was full of eager spectators. The signal was given, and our heroine, managing her horse with perfect grace, came cantering down. Increasing her speed as

she approached the post, she couched her lance, and with a little cry of triumph, she carried off the ring amid a roar of applause from the spectators. But now what is it that blanches Henniker's cheek and changes the plaudits of the lookers-on into a confusion of ejaculatory apprehension? Eva was being run away with! Her horse, a splendid Gulf Arab, over-fed, under-worked, and excited by all the mad galloping of other animals during the last hour, had taken the bit between his teeth and was bolting. For a moment all was dismay and wild shouting. Officers and sowars ran towards their horses, while something about the inadvisability of chasing a runaway flashing through Henniker's mind, caused him to hesitate.

While in an agony of uncertainty, a horse tore madly past him, and Norah, for it was she, called him to follow; "Come on," she shrieked, "some one must be with her should she be thrown." Henniker promptly followed, and both he and Norah were soon neck and neck in headlong pursuit. Away flew the white Arab, making for the open country in the direction of Dera Moollah Khan; Eva sat him like a rock; she had abandoned her lance at the very outset, and had used both hands in sawing at her horse's mouth, but the brute had the bit firmly between his teeth, and would take no denial. He had made up his mind for a mad gallop, and meant to have it. Eva soon lost her hat, and her Grecian knot becoming unloosed, her long beautiful hair streamed behind her. Away went the white, and about one hundred yards in his track thundered his pursuers. Now came a water-course over which the runaway flew like a bird, then a milk hedge which he jumped with ease. The pursuers urged their horses to their utmost: *they* were on their good behaviour, but the noble brutes seemed to understand they were being called on to perform their best, for they stretched themselves out to their work, keeping neck and neck in the mad pursuit.

Norah and Henniker were both superb riders, both were solicitous for Eva's safety; the one was actuated by gratitude, the other by love.

"Thank God he's not making for the lines," muttered Henniker, taking a hedge with his companion.

"Where do you think he's going to?" she gasped.

"He'll get on to the Dera road in a minute. Oh if she could manage to turn him into it one way or the other."

"Shout to her to try."

He did so. "Miss Fosbrooke!"

Eva hearing the cry, turned her head for a moment.

"Try and turn him into the road," shouted Henniker; "there it is right in front of you, that line of trees."

A brief wave of the hand in reply told him he was understood, and as pursued and pursuers neared the road, it was a moment of awful suspense for the latter. The road ran at right angles and was heavilyavenued. There was danger of Eva being carried against the boughs, or escaping that, and given she succeeded in turning her horse, the sudden swerve might bring him down and throw his rider. It was a terrible moment, and they both knew the risk she ran. They could see the girl was gathering herself for a grand effort. "God be merciful," murmured Henniker, horror and apprehension at his heart; but when at the next instant he saw she had shot between two trees, and by sheer strength and courage had turned her horse up the road, his overcharged feelings overcame him. "Bravely, splendidly done, noble girl," he wildly shouted, "bear up, we are gaining on you, keep on the road."

"My brute is blown," gasped Norah, "you go on, I'll follow as fast as he'll go."

It was true. The white, on gaining the smooth level road, seemed imbued with fresh wind and speed, for tossing his heels in the air, he neighed wildly, and tore on faster than ever. Norah's horse was in over-condition, and now showed symptoms of flagging. Not so however Henniker's charger; kept to the working point by constant exercise, relieved of the usual cumbersome military trappings, and now carrying only a light saddle and snaffle, with no sabretache and scabbard dangling about his flanks, he was very fit; and when Henniker, at Norah's bidding, again called on his animal, he shot ahead with redoubled vigour. The evening was closing in, but still the mad gallop continued, and now a fresh danger presented itself. The dark

bungalow of Shah Walli appeared in front. What if Eva's horse took it in his head to turn in here? "Take care of the bungalow gate," called Henniker, now about three lengths behind, "he may turn in there; keep the off-rein tight." Scarcely had he uttered the words when Eva was abreast of the bungalow, and her horse, as Henniker feared, swerved suddenly into the gate, shooting his rider out of the saddle on to the hard ground within the enclosure. A suppressed cry of horror escaped from Henniker's lips—in another moment he was off his horse, and taking the beloved form in his arms, he carried her into the bungalow. Laying her gently on one of the charpoys, he rushed in search of water. Bringing a jug full from the bath-room, he proceeded to bathe Eva's temples. The girl was quite unconscious, and Henniker was in an agony of fear lest she should have received some fatal injury. "Oh, my darling, my darling," he murmured, apostrophising the inanimate form before him. "May God in His mercy save you from harm; Eva, my Eva, look at me darling, tell me where you are hurt; Oh God, what would I give to see Fagan here now!"

She lay quite still, her face pale and colourless and her riding habit all covered with white dust. From what he could judge, she appeared to have fallen on her back. He knew not what injuries she may have sustained, and his innate sense of delicacy deterred him from handling her for the purpose of ascertaining. He knew she wanted air and breathing room; he knew and saw how tightly her riding habit fitted her and by loosening which she would have better chance of recovering, but no, she was sacred to him and he dared not lay his hand on the swelling bust laying there just now so void of movement and palpitation. He however took the small pretty head on his arm and passed his hand to the back of it, satisfied himself there was no wound, so he continued bathing her face with the water, and prayed for someone to come. The decrepit old khansamah could do nothing beyond stand at the gate on the look-out for assistance. "Eva, darling Eva," continued Henniker, his eyes filled with tears, "my love, my life, look on me, God be praised she's coming too," he ejaculated, in a more hopeful

tone, noticing a tremor of the eyelids and a faint return of colour to the lips and cheeks. "You are better now, dear Miss Fosbrooke," he added, as she at last opened her eyes and looked wonderingly at him. Her head was still on his arm, he was kneeling by her bedside, and there was no one there, so as she sighed deeply and attempted to rise, he threw his other arm around her and pressed his lips to her's in one long fervid kiss. She was too weak to resist, and suffered him to kiss her.

"You should not have done that," she quietly remarked, when at length he released her, and she sat up.

"Don't be angry with me, don't condemn me," he answered, gently, "you are everything that is adorable, everything that is beautiful to me, Miss Fosbrooke. Eva, dear Eva, I love you with all my heart and soul. I have long been waiting to tell you this. With my love, darling, I offer you an honest and true heart; Eva, make me happy, and tell me you will be my wife."

He knelt beside her as he uttered all this, his handsome face all aglow with the passion his words inspired him, while she sat motionless, her face buried in her hands.

"Forgive me," he at length said, "for my presumption in kissing you; my love for you is my only excuse."

"I forgive you," she replied, giving him her hand.

"And may I hope for your love?" he asked.

"No, I cannot give you that; don't be unhappy," she added, turning towards him and seeing the anguish her words called up to his face, "but I can love no one."

"No one! Oh, Eva, will you spurn such love as I offer you?"

"I don't spurn it," she said, sweetly; "I only say I can't love any one sufficiently to become a wife to him; I shall always love and esteem you as a brother," and with the words she leaned towards him and kissed him; "I must thank you for your care of me; for my sake be happy, and think no more of me except as a sister who will always love you very very much."

"Is this your final answer? Will you never change?"

"It is, and I shall never change," she answered, gravely.

"My God, my God," groaned poor Henniker, bowing his head on the bedside.

There was a painful silence. Poor fellow, he was fighting hard. Then, raising his eyes towards her, he said, "As you will then, Miss Fosbrooke, I shall be equally faithful to the memory of this my first and only love, for I shall never wed another."

They sat there for some time without speaking. The silence was at length broken by the footfall of a horse, and the next moment Norah appeared at the door. "Oh, I'm so glad you are alive, at all events," she exclaimed, joyfully. "Dear little duck! no bones broken, I hope, but what's all this; what are you both in tears for?" she added, looking from one to the other, amazement in her fine eyes. "Oh, whew! I see what it is: poor Mr. Henniker, I am sorry for you, but it's no business of mine; what a gallop you gave us, Miss Fosbrooke. Here are the ruck," she continued, as the clattering of a score of horses fell on the ear. They all entered, and hearty were the congratulations conferred on our heroine at her narrow escape. A conveyance arrived in due course, and Eva, propped up with numerous cushions, was driven home by Norah. People guessed what had occurred, and poor Henniker sat down to dinner that evening at Mess the most miserable of men.

CHAPTER XVII.

*How Eva showed her gratitude—Henniker's acceptance thereof—
The two chums talk over the matter—Fond love, lost love.*

Eva's adventure of course formed a nine days' wonder in the limited society of Khalsapore. Congratulations on her escape, coupled with praises of the plucky way she stuck to her horse, poured in on her from all sides. Henniker, too, came in for his share. "I couldn't have done more, Hen," was Dr. Fagan's remark; and the young officer, sore as he was at heart, felt a glow of pride at the thought of having been of some little service to the woman he loved.

Eva became speedily convalescent. Her system had received a shock, nothing more, and between Fagan's unremitting attention and her lady friends, she was up and about in a few

days. She had duly told her father of Henniker's declaration. The Colonel loved his young Adjutant, and felt disappointed when Eva went on to say she had kindly but firmly refused him. Her father merely sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and said there were few finer fellows in the service than Bob Henniker. Mrs. Dalrymple, however, when Eva confided the matter to her, was not so easily disposed of. "Why, child," she said, "what possible objection can you have to him? he is a very good young fellow, and liked by everyone who knows him, how could you have been so silly?" Miss Fosbrooke explained herself pretty much in the same terms as those she used on that memorable evening at the Shah Walli bungalow, adding that she had every regard for Mr. Henniker, but that marriage was out of the question.

"Well, all I can say is, my dear, I think you are very foolish and ungrateful to boot; and do you mean to say that you have made no acknowledgment, no recognition of his devotion to you that day? Oh, Eva!"

"I have been thinking of that for some time," replied Eva, meekly, "and I intend giving him this," detaching a handsome gold locket from her watch chain, containing a miniature of herself; "do you think it would please him?"

"Rather a lover-like sort of gift," replied Mrs. Dalrymple, looking at the sweet face dubiously, "why not give him the original?"

"No! that can never be," she said, sadly.

"Well, send it to him," replied Clara, "but if you are determined to consign him to misery, you had better let him understand you clearly, for such a souvenir as this might tend to inspire him with hope."

So when her friend had gone, Eva sat down and wrote the following note:—

"MY DEAR MR. HENNIKER,

"You must, I am afraid, ere this have put me down as very ungrateful in making you no return, inadequate perhaps, for the great service you rendered me on that unfortunate evening. I look on you as my preserver, for had you not come to my aid I might be now lying in my grave instead of penning these

lines to you. I can make but a very poor return. Will you then, dear Mr. Henniker, accept the accompanying little souvenir as a token of my regard and gratitude, and believe in the sincerity of these sentiments? I hope we shall ever be on terms of the best, kindest friendship. I wish my feelings had allowed me to give you a different answer that evening, but on this point I can never change. Don't be hurt, dear Mr. Henniker, yours is a heart that any girl with her own unscathed with sorrow, would value, and there are many who will prize your love. Again thanking you from the bottom of my heart,

"Believe me,

"Dear Mr. Henniker,

"Your very sincere and grateful

"EVANGELINE FOSBROOKE."

Henniker, on receiving this message with the locket, kissed the miniature over and over again, and hung it round his neck next to his heart. He then sat down and wrote this note:—

"MY DEAR MISS FOSBROOKE,

"I accept your precious gift with warmest thanks. I wear it next to my heart, and have made a vow never to remove it thence. It will only leave me on my death, when it will be returned to you. With my last dying effort I shall send it to you, or my executors will do so, for I have this day put into my desk a paper recording my wish. So, dear Miss Fosbrooke, when the locket comes back to you, know that the hand wielding this pen is lying cold in death, and that my heart, faithful to you in life, will have remained faithful to you even in death. I intend henceforth to so shape my worldly course as to make me worthy of entering that Heaven where you, pure angelic being, will in the life to come be sure of finding your eternal home.

"God bless you, dear Miss Fosbrooke,

"And believe me,

"Ever your most sincere and faithful

"ROBERT HENNIKER."

"Yes, that will do, old fellow," said Fitzmaurice, to whom his friend had read the note aloud, "I think you're wise in not nurturing any hopes in that quarter."

"I am not, but what makes you say so, Fitz?"

"Because, as I told you before, I never thought she would care for anyone else again, and I feel sure she intends keeping true to her first love."

"To Carr?"

"Of course; she is just one of those single-hearted conscientious characters who stick to one through life."

"One what?"

"Why one love, one fancy, or one whatever you like."

"But Carr is married and out of her reach altogether."

"True, but that won't prevent a girl like her from keeping her heart faithful to the memory of her first love."

"You would not insinuate, Fitz, you think her capable of continuing to entertain a passion for Carr? that ——"

"God forbid, she's too pure and too good for that. What I say is, Miss Fosbrooke having had one man enshrined in her heart, will never have another."

"Don't you think though that time will cause her to alter her resolution?"

"Never! there is only one circumstance in my opinion which might allow her to marry."

"What's that?"

"Mrs. Carr's death, and Carr's consequent freedom. If Carr were unshackled and he asked Miss Fosbrooke a second time, she'd accept him, but I feel sure she will never marry otherwise."

Henniker sighed.

"Poor Hen," said Fitzmaurice, compassionately, "I feel awfully sorry for you, dear old chap, but there's no use fretting over it. It can't be mended, and the best thing for you to do is to look at things philosophically in the face. In time I dare say you will get over all this, and when we move next year you may come across some charmer who will fill up the void in your heart."

"Never! Fitz, I feel sure I also will remain true to my first and only love. Nothing and no one will be able to tempt me to be otherwise."

Fitzmaurice shrugged his shoulders, and proceeded to light a cheroot.

"I want to ask you a favour, Fitz," said Henniker, after a short silence.

"Ask away, old man, you know I am at your service, body and soul."

"I have, as you know, promised Miss Fosbrooke to allow only death to part me from her gift, and that when that locket returns to her she must accept it as a sign that I am no more."

"Well."

"I have to-day placed in my desk, together with my baptismal certificate and commission, a slip of paper containing instructions to that effect, and I want you to promise me to see my wish carried out should I be unable to do so."

"Meaning, if you die suddenly, or something of that sort, and I am by?"

"Exactly."

"Yes, Hen, I promise, but where have you got the thing?"

"What thing?"

"The locket."

"Here," and Henniker, opening the front of his shirt, disclosed a small chamois leather bag containing the locket, and suspended by a thin gold chain round his neck.

Fitzmaurice's eyes dimmed as he saw this new proof of his friend's hopeless love and adoration. Springing up, he embraced his comrade: "my poor Henniker," he said, in a voice moved with emotion, "I am ready if need be to die for you. Would I could be of real use to you in this business and the means of making you happy, I would go over to her this minute and plead your cause in person, on my knees too, did I think there was the slightest chance of success, which, alas, there is not. She has no heart now, Hen, to bestow on you or anyone else, and she'll only regain it on the one contingency I have already alluded, and even then she'd give it to the same man. Confound the women, I say, and thank God I'm not in love or likely to be either. Bear up, old man, is the very best advice I can give you."

"I know, I know," sobbed Henniker, on his friend's shoulder, "I must bear in silence, and offer my devotion to her as I do to my God, for I feel she is hopelessly beyond me, and you are right in what you think of her feelings."

"Look here, Hen," said Fitzmaurice, after they had resumed their seats, "about the locket. Supposing (which God forbid) you are killed in action? War is not at all improbable, you know, and if some rascally Afghan were to get hold of it, what then?"

"That contingency too I have thought of," said Henniker, "I intend having written in several languages on parchment, a brief statement of facts connected with the locket, and which I will place in the bag. Asiatics, you know, are chivalrous to a certain extent, and should it fall into the hands of any but some thorough-paced *budmash*, he who reads the paper will, I feel sure, do as the paper bids."

"And what will that be?"

"That the locket is a love-token, and that if the finder will return it with the paper to the nearest British officer or outpost, God will bless him."

"A capital idea in the abstract, old man, but I question if it will fizz."

From that time forth there came a marked change in Bob Henniker's manner. There was a melancholy, almost stern, look in his face that spoke of the bruised heart within. Though prompt and careful as ever in his duties, there was an utter absence of that light-hearted joyousness, that frank good humour, heretofore so characteristic of the man. He still retained the secretaryship of the Gymkhana, and although no one could complain of his not evincing the usual amount of interest in its welfare and arrangements, his name never appeared now in connection with any of its events. He took to reading deeply, and would be closeted with Mr. Molehampton for hours daily. Truly, poor fellow, his heart was very very sore. His friends would rally him on his altered demeanour, thinking that the edge of his sorrow would wear away in time, but when week after week and month after month passed, and found him still

the same, people saw it was a case of a seared heart, of affections crushed, and a young life cut short of the pleasures, hopes and fond aspirations of this world; but oh, how enriched, how ennobled no doubt by hopes of holier things and thoughts of the world to come, and everlasting life!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Approach of the hot weather—How things went on—A spurt of gaiety—The Cardiganshire hop—How some ladies looked.

Some months passed, the hot weather was coming on, and preparations were being made for that most trying season. Mr. Thorowbad had visited Colonel Fosbrooke's swimming bath accompanied by a "*Murramuth*" contractor; a new Persian wheel had been ordered, and carpenters were at work on the dressing rooms. The closed badminton courts were being re-floored, and the lawn tennis nets were soon to be pulled down, the game being too violent a one for the hot season. People began to lay aside warm clothing and appear in the airiest of material, and strings of camels loaded with huge cases, stalking in from the direction of the landing place, told of dozens of aerated waters and other refreshing drinks for thirsty souls during the next few months. The *tattywallahs* had already been round, taking measurements of doors and windows, while the domestic servants now began to appear in white, cool and clean after their suffocating dress of the winter. *Punkahwallahs* were being engaged, and the punkahs on roofs and in compounds were being set to rights. Everything in fact was being made ready to meet the great enemy of our race out here, to wit, heat.

We must glance at the Carrs for a moment. George had nobly kept his promise. From being a hard drinker he was now nearly a total abstainer. He endeavoured to make himself as pleasant as possible to his wife, and Norah, perceiving the agreeable change in him, reciprocated to the utmost her nature would allow. True, moreover, to his concession regarding Trollys, he refrained from raising any objection to the constant presence of the man in his house. Though both Norah and

Trollys were very guarded in his presence, yet a thousand and one little things pointed only too plainly to the nature of the understanding existing between them. George Carr at heart was a good, noble man : Eva's benign influence had brought out his better qualities. So exquisite to him was this new sense of peace, that rather than cause fresh dissension in the house, he was content to look on in silence, hoping and praying that his wife would have prudence to stop short of that dread Rubicon, to plash their feet in which so many of our women delight in, but crossing which they become as the angels in hell. Of course, since the general reconciliation, the Carrs had been out a good deal, and had entertained in turn. They met Trollys at a very few houses. At Norah's table, however, he was a standing dish, and her guests would gaze in astonishment as proof after proof, far too plain, of Trollys' footing in the house would be made so painfully manifest. It was "Captain Trollys, please do this ; Captain Trollys, you know where my smelling salts bottle is," and so on. Should a delay occur in the serving of dinner, Norah would give him a look, and away he would steal to see what was up. During dinner the khansamah perhaps would ask his mistress for the keys ; she would motion the man over to where Trollys was, who either had them or knew where to find them. It was Trollys who would open the piano and ask people to sing, and later on, at a sign from the mistress of the house, he it was who ordered in the whisky and soda, the usual way out in this country of intimating to your guests you have had enough of them, and that it was time to "*chull*." George Carr winced under all this, but he bore it with fortitude and seeming equanimity. He fully hoped his honor perfectly safe in his handsome wife's keeping, and under this impression was content to allow her to "gang her ain gait."

, It is a peculiarity with most Anglo-Indian communities to indulge in a spurt of gaiety (call it dissipation, if you will,) at the close of the cold season, before everyone gives in to universal lassitude and chronic state of dishabille during, awful Indian hot weather. Khalsapore was no ex and everybody was talking about the pending dance at

Cardiganshire Mess, and a grand paper-chase *à cheval* which was to follow. The dance had been on the cards for some time, and ladies therefore had ample leisure to procure their ball-dresses for the occasion from Bombay and elsewhere. Norah was in great glee at the prospects of the hop. She had tried hard to get up amateur theatricals, wherein she had hoped to appear to advantage, but the people were too slow, she said, besides which, a difficulty presented itself in the paucity of ladies; so the theatricals fell through. This dance then came in very opportunely; it would be the first festivity of the kind she participated in since coming out, and she had duly sent her instructions to Mrs. Geneva at Bombay for a ball-dress according to her own tastes.

The evening at length came round. Colonel Cheyne and his officers had surpassed themselves in the excellence and taste of their preparations. The fine mess-room was decorated with the colours of the regiment, stars of bayonets and pots of foliage and flowers. The boarded floor was waxed and polished to a nicety. The orderly-room had the supper in it, while a bar for the dispensing of ices, soup in cups, and drinks of sorts was established at one end of the deep verandah and presided over by some of the prettier women obtainable in the barracks. The reception-room was also tastefully arranged, and opening into it was a cloak or retiring-room for the ladies, in charge of some more women from the barracks. The band was located in the round house opposite the main entrance, while numerous Chinese lanterns and rustic seats were dispersed about the shrubs and walks in the well-kept grounds.

"Come," exclaimed Colonel Cheyne to his wife and daughter, who, as the entertainers, had arrived early, and were taking a final look round, "I think we shall do, what say you, Leah?"

"Beautifully, my love," replied Mrs. Cheyne, looking about her, while Aggie Cheyne, essaying to try the floor, slipped on its glassy surface and almost came down.

"DeFabeck," said the Colonel to an officer in attendance, "no lack of dances, mind you; should extras be asked for, tell old Krautz to be ready with them."

"I've settled all that, Colonel," replied Captain DeFabeck, "but you know Krautz's failing?"

"Aye, but he's sober to-night, I hope."

"Always is, sir, at the commencement of the evening, but after supper when he has had his snack, he's apt to get a little out of gear, but I have told Davis to watch him, and Lloyd too, if they find he gets too talkative. Lloyd is to volunteer to lead the band while Davis takes the old boy by the arm and toddles him home."

"That's all right. Hullo, here's somebody coming."

It proved to be the Thorowbads—Mrs. Thorowbad dressed with almost austere simplicity. Then came the Molehamptons, who were speedily followed by Clara Dalrymple and her husband. Now Mrs. Dalrymple on all ordinary occasions looked well, even when arrayed in a morning gown with garden gloves on her hands, thick boots on her feet and a dilapidated old terai hat slouched on her head, in which costume she would appear when busy about her house and grounds; but her's was an order of beauty that was at its best when adorned. Therefore, on this particular evening, when she stepped out of her carriage and sailed into the reception-room on Colonel Cheyne's arm, she dazzled all who beheld her. Attired with exquisite taste, her low-cut dress displayed her snow white shoulders and rise of her glorious bust in a most seductive manner, while the short sleeves exposed to view a pair of robust but shapely arms set off by heavy gold bracelets worn above the elbow, and almost up to which came the long many-buttoned gloves. The raised skirt shewed her pretty feet encased in hose and shoes to match her dress; and looking at her from any standpoint, one could not keep admiring this very handsome woman as a splendid specimen of that type of substantial beauty for which our nation is so deservedly famous. "Dance with you, Mr. Fitzmaurice," she laughingly exclaimed, smiling up at the slim young officer, who, card in hand, accosted her as soon as she had seated herself. "Yes, with pleasure, I will give you the 'Blue Danube,' but remember the last time, at your dance, I was a little too much for you, I fancy."

"It was the first occasion of my having the honor of your hand, Mrs. Dalrymple, and it was all my own blooming awkwardness; I promise there will be no spill this time."

"How do you know but that I have put on flesh since then?" she enquired, merrily. "All right then, the 'Blue Danube' with you;" and they wrote accordingly.

Now came more guests, Eva among them. She was simply but most tastefully attired; the charming peculiarity of her figure alluded to already now all the more marked. She was flushed with excitement, and her sweet pensive eyes danced with pleased expectation; for, be it remembered, that our heroine, though ever walking in the fear of God, thought it no sin to surrender her waist and bosom to a man's embrace to participate with him in the delights of the dance. People continued to flock in, and among the last to come were Captain and Mrs. Carr. Now Khalsapore is an isolated station and the sojourners threat, cut off to a great extent from their fellowmen, are apt, like others "up-country," to become conservative in their ideas as to "modes" and rusty in matters connected with the last new vagary or the newest eccentricity of dame Fashion. Small wonder was it therefore to see astonishment depicted on most faces when Norah Carr entered the room. Her dress was in two shades of yellow, which colour suited her dark hair, eyes and rich complexion. The skirt was so tight that, besides, plainly betraying the very contour of her limbs, it so impeded her movements that she stepped with difficulty. In lieu of sleeves, she wore the new shoulder strap, then just coming into vogue, the merest apology to decency, then the corsage itself was cut so low before and behind, that on first beholding her it was difficult to believe that she had not omitted some important part of her toilette. Of course Mrs. Carr's appearance created a variety of emotions. Ladies, such as Mrs. Doyle, Mrs. Thorowbad, and Mrs. Molchampton blushed from very shame. Mrs. Dalrymple coolly surveyed Norah through her double eye-glass and laughingly remarked to Major Doyle, the costume appeared suitable to the growing heat, "warranted to keep the wearer cool," she whispered. Eva looked on the rich expanse of Norah's beautiful

skin with calm indifference, condemning the expose in her heart, but saying nothing.

Her card was soon full, and several had to go away disappointed with the promise of extras. There were many other attractive and handsome women in the room, but these were "all right" and nothing out of the common. They had to look on and witness the triumph of their sister, who by boldly outraging the proprieties and appearing in as great an undress as she dared, won all the admiration and all the best dancing men, leaving the quieter and older present to get on together as best they might.

Trollys came with the Carrs. He looked very handsome this evening. He wore his medals, and as he lounged about the room twirling his long cavalry moustache and filling up the blanks in his card, it was difficult to connect so handsome and engaging an exterior with the heart full of guile within. George Carr, immediately on entering the room, became painfully alive to the sensation caused by his wife, and burning with humiliation, he endeavoured to mask his feelings by entering into conversation with a group of officers at the further end of the Reception-room.

CHAPTER XIX.

Dancing—Norah discussed—A tête-à-tête outside—A compact with the devil—The other side of the picture.

The business, or pleasure rather, of the evening now commenced. The band struck up a quadrille and Colonel Cheyne opened the ball with Mrs. Dalrymple. Then came a valtz, and to the sadly sweet strains of "The Officers" Eva paired off with poor Henniker. Fitzmaurice sailed away with Norah. George Carr was Aggie Cheyne's cavalier and Colonel Fosbrooke encircled Mrs. Cheyne's still lissom waist. Of course there were many other couples, and the large room presented a most animated appearance. Red and blue uniforms intermingled with gold and silver lace flashed amid trailing skirts and white shoulders. Spurred heels vied with pretty feet attired in all the colours of the rainbow. Gallant breasts, many decorated, supported pretty heads, snow-white arms showed against the

background of red, blue or black, white pliant waists yielded to the strong grasp, and the clasped hands completed the delirious unison of the dancers.

"Phew!" ejaculated Fitzmaurice, as at the end of "The Officers," and having surrendered Norah Carr to Trollys, he joined a knot of lookers-on at one of the side doors; "she's a caution and no mistake."

"Who? Mrs. Carr?" asked DeFabeck.

"Aye."

"Why? What about her?"

"What about her! Why, man, she has nothing on."

"Hah! hah! good," remarked Marrowspoon, "but how do you know she has nothing on Fitz? Did she tell you?"

"You go and dance with her, that's all," retorted Fitzmaurice hotly and wiping his brow with his handkerchief.

"But what is it really, Fitz," asked DeFabeck, "she has me down for 'My Queen' and I should like to know beforehand what to expect."

"Well the truth is, she has no stays on, or whatever you call them."

"No!" exclaimed DeFabeck, while a suppressed howl of merriment arose from the group. "By looking at her one would think she was trussed up in corsets and all sorts of jims and laced too up to the nine."

"But she's not though," asserted Henniker, "she's as all innocent of that as I am."

"But how do you know, Fitz?"

"How do I know? Gad, man, haven't I the sense of feeling and can't any one with a grain of sense tell the difference when there's a rampart of buckram between you and a woman and when there is not?"

Another ill-concealed explosion of merriment, and the group separated.

"Come along outside, I want to have to talk to you, darling," whispered Trolly to Norah after a dance. They sallied forth into the cool night and, choosing a retired spot, sat down on a bench.

"Norah," he said, "how long is this farce to last?"

"There you are again, Fred, you are always asking me the same question, what more would you have me to do?"

"What more, darling! I want you entirely to myself. I want you to leave the world behind and come with me. Norah, since the day you allowed me to give you my first kiss, have I not urged you to take this step. I can bear it no longer, you have promised to be mine. Here we have no opportunity of loving each other; to be entirely happy we must fly, darling. My queen, my idol, be not deaf to my prayers," and, clasping the beautiful woman to his breast, he glued his lips to hers.

"Fred, you know I love you," she panted, leaning on him, and with her bare white arms encircling his neck, "but, dear, you must not urge me to take this step, I should be ruined in the eyes of the world, ready and willing as I am to make you the greatest sacrifice still I have no idea of being pointed at as one who has fallen. Of course George would never condone such an offence, then when you have tired of me where should I be?"

"I should never tire of you, my angel," he exclaimed vehemently, "I should love you for ever and ever and will make you my wife directly you are divorced, for Carr would be sure to do that, so what more would you have?"

"No, no, Fred, I am sufficient woman of the world to know that now you are talking insincerely and I am acquainted with your character enough to be convinced, you don't mean what you say, you would never marry a divorced wife. Your people at home would be up in arms at once. All very well your affirming to the contrary in all the ardour of your passion for me, but once cooled down you would quietly throw me over and trouble yourself no more about me."

"Norah! you will drive me mad by these constant doubts. Have you no faith in my solemn promises?"

"None, dear," she laughingly replied, shifting from her seat by his side on to his knees, "Promises, Fred, are like pie crust, especially with you men in your dealings with us."

"What in heaven's name do you mean?"

"Nothing more than what I say; you would soon tire of me, Fred, all your promises would be broken and you would no more marry me than the Amir of Cabul would."

"Shall I swear?"

"Swear about what?"

"Swear to marry you directly Carr divorces you and we are free?"

"Worse still, dear, you would only perjure yourself."

"Then, Norah, what do you propose doing? This dalliance at a distance is more than human nature can bear. This loving each other to distraction, and yet being obliged to hold aloof from each other."

"Hush! it is out of the question, Fred; once for all, understand I am not going to fly in the face of the world and Mrs. Grundy, and do as you wish, but"—

"But what?" he asked, trembling with eagerness.

She took his head between her hands and whispered a few words into his ear.

"My darling, my queen, my angel," was all he could utter.

She had met his wishes in a measure utterly beyond his most sanguine expectations. He imagined that to gain his object he would be obliged to get her to consent to an elopement, and under cover of promise of ultimate marriage achieve his purpose; but now, those few words she whispered in his ear gave him a great shock of exultation. Intoxicated at the prospect, words failed him, but seizing her in his arms he covered her face, with hot passionate kisses. "How shall we manage, darling?" he asked at length.

"To-morrow is the paper-chase," she remarked, adjusting her disordered dress.

"Yes, well?"

"I won't go."

"And I?"

"Don't you either."

"Then, dear?"

"Wait; which way are they going did they say?"

"Towards Jamalpore."

"That's not in the direction of the Shah Walli bungalow, is it?"

"No, it's further north."

"Very well then, Fred, though I shall not go to the paper-chase, on account of a bad headache, still that won't prevent me taking a quiet ride at dusk up the Dera Moolia Khan road."

"Well, dear," he whispered.

"Don't come over to-morrow. Can't you manage to go out shooting?"

"To what end, Norah?"

"Oh, obtuse that you are! give out you are going out shooting in the direction of the river."

"Well?"

"Then make a detour and come round by dusk."

"Come round where?"

"Oh, Fred," she cried almost hysterically, "can't you understand? Must I be the planner and plotter? Won't you take a share of our contemplated sin?"

"He now divined her meaning. They embraced again, and indulging in one more long fierce kiss, returned to the dancing.

The above presents a sad picture of woman taking the lead, the initiative in depravity; but, reader, it is a true incident—a fact stranger than fiction. They were about on a par in guile. He, ready to rob her of the fairest jewel in her womanly inheritance, under promise of atonement which he never intended to accord. She, careful of her good name before the world, but careless of losing her honor, in order to gratify her illicit passion, and deceiving yet not to be deceived, ready to yield up that inestimable gem in the embraces of this man who had gradually but surely corrupted her mind, only in the end to corrupt her body.

"So many thanks for your kind gift," whispered Henniker to Eva, during a pause in the "Night Bell."

"I am glad you like it. I could think of nothing more appropriate."

"Like it! Miss Fosbrooke. I worship it. I have it here next to my heart."

"You should worship God only," said Eva, seriously.

"God first, yes: then you, and anything belonging to or coming from you, even to the very ground you have trod on."

"You are still very sore, I am pained to see."

"Can you wonder at it, Miss Fosbrooke?" he asked, quietly; "you are my first love: it is not fated I should have you. Must not my heart writhe under the disappointment?"

"Why don't you try and forget the past?" she asked, looking up kindly into his face.

"Are you trying to forget your past?"

"No."

"Nor can I forget mine," he answered, gravely; "you are enshrined in my heart, and there will you and you only continue to reign as long as it throbs. As I am not permitted to call you mine, it is a secret but painful solace to keep myself to the memory of my love during my life."

"And in the life to come?" she asked.

"There, there is no marrying or giving in marriage, Miss Fosbrooke, we shall be as the angels in heaven, and up yonder I humbly hope to be with you and love you for ever and ever."

"Do you really believe this, Mr. Henniker?"

"I do," he answered, an enthusiastic ring in his voice and look in his eyes, "and it this belief alone that strengthens me now to bear the burden of my sorrow with the resignation and subservience I am able to exercise."

"My poor Mr. Henniker," she said, her own eyes full of tears, "may God continue his aid to you till the end."

They had wandered out into the grounds, they were standing face to face, and he was holding her hands.

With her last words she reached up and kissed him.

It was only a kiss such as angels give.

CHAPTER XX.

The Rubicon crossed—The plunge taken.

"Isn't it a shame?" exclaimed Aggie Cheyne, as she cantered up to the group of paper-chasers assembled at the rendezvous, "Mrs. Carr is not coming."

"How do you know?" asked Eva.

"She stopped me as I was passing her house just now, and said she had a bad headache, and so could not come."

"Humph!" ejaculated Clara Dalrymple, "then you may be bound Captain Trollys wont join us."

"That I know he wont," said Mr. Molehampton, "for I met him just as I was turning out of my gate; he remarked he had got *khubber* of game towards Pathanktoe, and was going out shooting."

"Here's Carr, though," remarked some one.

"Poor devil," muttered Colonel Morton, under his heavy moustache.

"Why, poor devil?" asked Clara, in a *sotto voce*, overhearing the remark.

"Would you do as his wife does, Mrs. Dalrymple?" enquired Colonel Morton, impressively.

"God forbid!"

"Exactly so, and you know my reasons for pitying him, my dear lady."

Fitzmaurice and DeFabeck were the hares. All was ready. The hares started, and after the given interval, the hounds streamed away in pursuit.

"Any given route, Fitz?" asked DeFabeck, "scattering scent freely."

"By Jove, I forgot to ask, but it does not much matter. I vote we get on behind the butts and then on to the road, which will give us a good run home."

"All right," and away they sped.

We will not follow the chase, or recount the vicissitudes attendant thereon; suffice be it to say, that as dusk had set in, Eva, who was not very strong, and had given up the chase, found herself with her father and George Carr, slowly plodding over a ploughed field lying immediately behind an isolated building; the high road ran on the other side of the house, and it was towards this they were making.

"I'm so thirsty," exclaimed Eva, wearily. "Papa, do you think I could get a glass of water at the bungalow?"

"I dare say, my love," replied the Colonel, dismounting and assisting his daughter to alight. "Come on in and sit down, while Carr and I will see if we can muster a glass of water between us; the place looks deserted," he added, "wonder where the old khansamah is?"

They passed through a gap in the wall and went on to a back-door. It was nearly dark. Traversing the rear room they entered the next, when * * *

CHAPTER XXI.

In the papers—George Carr's illness—Magdalene—George's sufferings—Convalescence—Husband and wife's last interview—Norah's dismissal.

It got into the papers under the head of "a painful scandal." Colonel Fosbrooke and Eva were as silent as the grave on the subject of what they had witnessed on that miserable evening in the dāk bungalow. The shock, however, to George Carr's feelings, threw him into a dangerous fever, during which he raved about his wrong. Anon, in his lucid moments, he would entreat those around his bed to repeat nothing that may have escaped him during his delirium.

For three long weeks was poor Carr in danger; but, thanks to his naturally good constitution, Eva's unremitting attention, and Dr. Fagan's skill, he rallied and passed the crisis.

And how sped the guilty couple during this interval? Trollys, anticipating ready acquiescence on Norah's part to his proposed elopement, had his furlough in his pocket; so immediately the "denouement" took place, he availed himself of it and disappeared from the station.

Late that fatal night, while George Carr was writhing on his bed of sickness, and as Eva was in the verandah making some cooling drink for the patient by Dr. Fagan's orders, a woman in a riding habit, leading a horse, passed round towards the back of the house. Seeing a light in the verandah, she paused, and Miss Fosbrooke, happening to look up at the foot-falls of the horse, recognised the wretched wife.

The two women met.

"Of course you know all, Miss Fosbrooke?"

"I do."

"And think me something very vile and wicked, doubtless?"

"How can I but think so?"

"Where is Captain Carr?"

"He is inside, and," added Eva, gravely, "has high fever on him, and is beginning, I'm afraid, to be delirious."

"Of course I shall not be wanted," said Norah, half defiantly, half wearily.

"I am surprised at your remark. There are others inside, and could you face them?"

"True, it is useless trying to justify myself to you or anyone else. Miss Fosbrooke, may I expect a little mercy of you at least?"

"Blessed are the merciful. Yes," she added, "you may count on my being merciful."

"Is my sin so very bad?"

"Hush! don't speak so wickedly; but it is not for us to judge you: God will do that; try and make your peace with Him before you talk of the forgiveness and mercy of your fellow-creatures."

"May I stay in this house?"

"Until you know your husband's pleasure concerning you, I think certainly you might."

"Thanks very much; good-night," and the unhappy girl continued on her way towards the back of the house.

So during that dreary fortnight and more did Norah Carr remain, to all intents, a prisoner in her room. Debarred from approaching her husband, and ashamed to accost the others in the house, she often stood by the door and listened to his delirious ravings on his wrong, his dishonor, and herself. Through a crevice in the woodwork she would behold those around the bed exchange meaning glances as the poor sufferer incoherently dwelt on his misery. Anon, he would change his tone. He would call on his Norah, his love; he bid her come to him, to receive his forgiveness, till she almost felt inclined to fly to his bedside, throw herself on her knees, and take his remission of her sin. Then he would resume the old strain, the same reproachful tone, that would sting her to the very marrow, and make the poor girl wish she had never been born. Ah! yes, those days were a living death to erring Norah. She

had verily and indeed passed that mystic Rubicon. She had fallen from her pedestal of fair fame and honor. Never more can she hold her head up. Never more can she call herself an honored wife. Down, down the deep abyss had she plunged, and there was no emerging therefrom. The scarlet letter is indelibly branded on her brow; the scathing iron has burnt deeply into her tender flesh, and though she lived to the age of Methusaleh, that dread mark will remain with her always, and go down with her to the grave!

The meeting between wronged husband and erring wife was a sad and painful one. It was not until Fagan was satisfied that his patient risked no relapse that he gave his consent to the interview. Carr, looking as if just recalled from his grave, lies on a sofa, his head propped up with pillows, and all the accessories of a sick room about him. By his side, on a teapoy, Eva's loving hands had arranged a vase of roses, and the sweet perfume of the flowers mingled with and subdued that undescribable but well-known odour of physic, always more or less present where the King of Terrors has been hovering. Our heroine is seated on a low chair by his side, and the open Bible on her knees testifies to the good work she is engaged in. The punkah waves to and fro overhead, and the light breeze, laden with the perfume of Norah's pretty flower garden, steals gently into the room, fanning the cheek of the weary and heart-sick sufferer. Good Fagan is sauntering up and down the verandah, enjoying a cheroot; and he pauses every now and then at the window and listens as the sweet voice reads words of comfort and consolation from the Good Book. This is the day George is to see his wife, and these two friends remain by him during the painful ordeal at his special request. Anon, Eva closes the Book, Fagan throws away his cheroot, finishes his peg, and comes in. At a sign from Carr, Miss Fosbrooke rises, sallies forth from the room, and in a few minutes returns, followed by Norah. Fagan stands up, and bows gravely as the poor guilty wife, beautiful and majestic even in her fallen state, approaches the foot of her husband's bed, and stands there before him with downcast eyes.

"Norah," said Carr, after contemplating her for a few moments attentively, "do you know the extent of the misery this fatal step of yours has brought down on both of us?"

"I am fully alive to what I have done," she replied, in her low melodious voice. "I am the chief sufferer, on me lies the shame, nothing falls on you; the world will pity you, while it will condemn me. Spare me your reproaches, they will not undo the past."

"I suffer equally with you, Norah: my honor is gone through your terrible indiscretion: a husband's fair fame is in his wife's keeping. If the wife abuses the sacred trust and loses the inestimable jewel committed to her charge, such a jewel once gone can never be recovered."

"The cause once removed, I don't see wherein you suffer more," she rejoined. "Of course I am no longer worthy of being called a wife. I acknowledge my fault. I know I am irrevocably fallen, and nothing remains for me but accept my destiny and punishment with what fortitude I may."

"Have you thought over the enormity of your sin, Norah? And, leaving out altogether your wrong to me, do you realize the nature of your offence towards God?"

"I know I have broken one of the commandments, but I did so under temptation."

"Do you remember my warning you against that man, Norah?"

"I do."

"And how I urged you to give up his acquaintance and shun him? Oh that you had taken my advice and thus avoided all this misery!"

"You must recollect our unhappy life together; this fact is the only one I have to urge in extenuation."

"Of what?" "Of having broken one of God's most stringent, most sacred laws? Of having fallen from your lofty and honorable position of wife and lady? Of having made yourself, by this one false and fatal step, an outcast among your fellows, an object not of pity, but of disdain? Can the fact of any amount of domestic unhappiness be urged as a plea for committing so

irrevocable a sin as you are guilty of? Norah, had you asked God for aid, you could have wrestled against this temptation. Had you behaved to me in a conciliatory manner, and made one step to meet me in my endeavours to commence a new and happier life, and used a wife's sweet influence to wean me from that weakness, which, with sorrow I confess, I was driven to by the very domestic unhappiness you allude to, you would have averted all this."

"Why then did you allow me to continue intimate with him?"

"For peace sake, Norah. I felt that your's is a nature best not thwarted, and I love tranquillity too much to risk disturbance. Besides, I had sufficient confidence in you to believe my honor to be safe in your keep. I knew you to be vain, flighty, and thoughtless; but if before that fatal evening any man had told me that you had as much as been kissed by any one but myself, I should have called that man a liar to his face."

What was she to say? What could she say? There she stood in all the glory of her early womanhood, humbled to the dust. She knew she had sinned; she knew she must now go forth unprotected into the world. The law, in a case like her's, would make no provision, no allowance for her. Her very bread depended on the mercy of this man, her husband. As she stood before him, trifling nervously with the many silver bangles on her wrist, she had thoughts of throwing herself at her husband's feet and imploring his mercy and forgiveness; but she was only too well aware of the terrible profundity of her crime, and she knew such a step would be useless. Poor thing! Poor erring thing! Oh woman, woman, most loveable, most pitiable of all God's creation, you whom we look on as mortals of superior mould, would that we could shield you from all the grosser sins and sorrows of this life, and, taking them on ourselves, enshrine you in our hearts as objects of our adoration and worship, a little lower than the angels!

Woman's grief is terrible to witness, no matter the attendant circumstances. Woman's troubles, woman's perplexities, make the sterner heart yearn to come to rescue and relief.

Here, in this shaded room, the poor Magdalene standing there undefended, unsupported, before the best judge this earth could give, her wronged and injured husband, say you the sentiment of pity stirred not in his heart? Ah! yes, it did. As he watched the look of blank misery on her face, the tear every now and then dropping from those long black lashes, the taper fingers toying nervously with the bangles on her wrists, the heaving of the noble bosom, and, above all, the twitching of the corners of the mouth as she vainly endeavoured to suppress her sobs, poor George felt inclined to open his arms to her and say, "Come, and sin no more." But the offence was too grave; she was polluted, unclean; and she must suffer and repent.

"It is useless prolonging this interview, Norah," resumed Carr, "and I have but a few more words to say to you. You know the penalties you have brought down on yourself, and that I am free to obtain a divorce and thus absolve myself entirely of all responsibility connected with you; but I am not going to do so. Your destroyer will, I am certain, trouble himself no more about you—it is the nature of such reptiles to destroy and abandon—I bid you therefore go in peace. Here," and he took a written cheque and some notes from a table by him, "here is sufficient ready money for your passage to Kurrachee. This cheque on the Bank of Bombay will cover all your expenses home, and I have written to Grindlay to hand you over the balance of your own money, besides which, I shall allow you two hundred a year as long as I live. Norah, in bidding you farewell, I would exhort you to repentance. You have been guilty of a great crime, and unless you humbly and sincerely pray for forgiveness, you will never receive God's pardon. Go, Norah, go in peace."

He reached forward, took her hand, placed the notes and cheque in it, and moved by an impulse of genuine pity, he drew her down towards him and imprinted a kiss on her forehead. Poor woman! she now gave way entirely. A sense of desolation came over her as she realized her position. Bid to go forth from her home, a stranger, an alien on the world's cold bosom, a wanderer with the red letter branded on her brow, a

waif, a stray ! convulsive sobs shook her, and her tears rained on her husband's head as she stood irresolutely by his side. Her sin came home to her very forcibly now, and the feeling of utter loneliness and incipient remorse made her very, very miserable.

"George," she at last articulated between her sobs, "dare I ask you to forgive me?" and the hands were removed for an instant from her face, and the eyes, red and swollen, looked on him piteously.

"You dare not, Norah. Go, I say, and in peace."

And she went.

CHAPTER XXII.

In Afghanistan—Henniker has a presentiment—Defeat and dishonor—Henniker dies—The City of refuge.

A little more than two years have elapsed, and the Afghan Campaigns have been well nigh fought out. Not quite though, for some of the bloodiest episodes of the drama have yet to be enacted; and on the eve of one of these we come across our old friends, Carlton's Irregulars, encamped with one or two other Cavalry corps, a Brigade of Infantry, and some Artillery. The British force is on the eve of a great battle, but everyone is confident, and blind reliance is placed in the wisdom and perspicuity of those in command.

"Gad ! I expect we shall get it hot and strong to-morrow, if what the spies say is true," exclaimed Eva's father, as he strolled up and down in front of the tents with Henniker.

"Indeed, yes, if the enemy is as strong as reported, sir ; but I question if they number ten thousand, even counting the Ghazis."

"Ten thousand or twenty thousand, we are ready for them, no matter the odds," replied the old Cavalry Colonel, lighting his pipe. "Henniker, my boy," turning and confronting his Adjutant, "I don't like your tone, what is up?"

The young officer sighed; "I have a presentiment, sir," he said.

“A presentiment! what about?”

“That I shall fall to-morrow.”

“So may we all, Henniker,” replied the Colonel, gravely. “However, we are in God’s hands, and must hope for the best.”

“I have a favour to ask you, sir.”

“Say on, my dear boy.”

“You know my feelings towards your daughter, Colonel, and you are aware she honored me with a little gift in remembrance of the poor service I rendered her on the occasion of her horse running away with her some two years ago?”

“Yes, well?”

“That gift I wear here, sir, next to my heart, never to part with it as long as I live. On my death, it is my earnest desire that it be returned to Miss Fosbrooke; and the favour I ask, Colonel, is, that should I fall to-morrow, and it lies in your power, you will kindly detach the locket from my breast, and take it back with you when the regiment returns.”

“My boy, I promise,” exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke, his voice moved with emotion, “if you fall (which God forbid) and I survive, I promise to endeavour to carry out your wishes.”

“Thanks, Colonel. I had asked poor Fitzmaurice, but he lies in the Pisheen Valley, happy and at rest, and I long to go the same way.”

“But why, my dear Henniker, do you give way to this despondency? Eva is surely not going to brood over her disappointment about Carr for ever; I dare say if you ask her a second time she will say yes, and make you happy.”

“Never, Colonel, even if I live to return. Miss Fosbrooke’s feelings will not change; of that I feel convinced. She will remain true to her first and only love.”

“So she says, and so you perhaps think; but I feel sure she will get over it in time, and when we are all happily back together, depend on my giving you a helping hand in the business, my dear boy.”

“You are very kind to say so, Colonel,” replied Henniker; “but my chances of such happiness depend on one single contingency.”

"And that is"—

"Carr's death, which—and I say it in all sincerity—God avert. Yes, if the chances of war saw Carr laid low to-morrow, and took me back alive, I should then hope, but not otherwise."

Colonel Fosbrooke was silent. He regarded his young brother-officer almost in the light of a son, and nothing would have gratified him more than seeing him Eva's husband ; but, alas ! such seemed ordained not to be. He thought of the struggle of the morrow. He himself might be killed, and his motherless girl would be left alone and unprotected. Did he only but know, however, that she was the promised wife of some worthy man, such as the gallant young soldier by his side, he felt he could die in peace.

"Cheer up, dear boy," he at length said, placing a hand on the young officer's shoulder. "Let us hope we all get through with whole skins to-morrow, and for the rest I trust all will come right."

Henniker sighed, but said nothing.

The morrow came, the day of dishonor and disaster to our arms. Two troops of Carltons are in line, with some other bodies of Cavalry, exposed to a murderous fire from the Afghan Artillery. Men and horses go down every minute, for the enemy have got the range, and shot tear through the ranks with fatal precision. The Cavalry Commander now orders that the squadrons be kept moving to lessen the risk, and, obedient to this mandate, Colonel Fosbrooke leads his men to the right and left. Meanwhile the Infantry are maintaining an unequal struggle against overwhelming numbers. Soon it is apparent that the Native corps are giving way. A crack Native rifle regiment breaks and flies in disorder ; other corps follow suit, leaving a single British regiment and guns to sustain the unequal fight. Now comes an Aide-de-Camp tearing up to the Cavalry Commander with orders to charge the enemy and save the guns. The word is repeated from squadron to squadron, sabres and lance-heads flash, officers take their places, and the line moves forward. The panic, however, had communicated

itself to the sowars, for our friends, after proceeding half-a-dozen horses' lengths, find that only a few troopers are following them, the rest are streaming away after the demoralized Infantry. Too late now. The British officers, with a handful of men, continue their wild charge. They are up with the guns. They cut right and left. Horses and men fall, and death and destruction are rampant on all sides. Poor Colonel Morton is shot dead, and he sinks from his horse without a moan. They fight manfully, officers and sowars. The semblance of formation, maintained during the mad gallop, is now entirely lost; and each man, surrounded by a knot of the enemy, fights for very life. George Carr, the wild light of battle in his eyes, is engaged in a desperate combat with two powerful tribesmen, who cut at him with their sharp tulwars, and already is our old friend wounded in several places. By a lucky stroke, Carr presently sends the sword flying out of the hand of his foremost adversary, and the next moment his own weapon transfixes the Afghan, who, throwing up his arms, falls prone to the ground with Carr's sword buried in his breast. In vain does the British officer strive to release the blade; he is comparatively disarmed, for there is no time to draw his revolver. His second adversary sees this. Clapping spurs to his horse, the Afghau, his keen tulwar raised, rushes at the helpless Englishman, and in another second Carr, with all his sorrows, would have been as things of the past; but just as the tribesman is in the act of striking, another form is interposed between him and his victim, and with a wild cry of "For Eva's sake," poor Bob Henniker receives on his bare head the murderous blow which, had it fallen where intended, might have been the means of removing the only obstacle between him and happiness. The tulwar cleaves him to the chin, and he falls dead mid the mass of struggling horses and men. There was no chance. All was lost. As Henniker fell there was a rush of Ghazis, which overwhelmed our people and bore them back hopelessly. The remnants of the Cavalry extricated themselves at fearful sacrifice, and what was left of the British force is now in disorderly retreat towards the city. Water! was the cry everywhere.

Infantry sepoys careered along in wild flight. Rifles, accoutrements, and baggage strewn the way, betokened a great disaster. The enemy pressed close in rear of our men, cutting, hacking and shooting. All was dishonor and defeat. The city of refuge, however, is reached by the survivors. An abortive sortie has been attempted, which, so far from tending to retrieve our fortunes, but again illustrated the gross incapacity of our leaders.

It is night, and a couple of dejected war-worn officers are seated on some stones at a corner of a street in the city. The booming of cannon on the walls, mingled with the unceasing crack of Martini Henris and Sniders show the place is environed; while at intervals a shell, better aimed than the rest, hums over head, drops into the city with a crash and explosion. The troops stand to their arms. Infantry leaning with crossed hands on their rifles, and Cavalry men standing by their chargers, all ready to act at a moment's notice.

"My God, this has been an awful affair," said Colonel Fosbrooke, in sorrowful tones. "All gone but you and I, Carr."

"I'm afraid so, Colonel," replied George, adjusting a bandage on his head, for a bullet had grazed it early in the fight. "Morton, poor fellow, must have been shot through the heart. I was just behind him and saw him, throw up his arms in that way peculiar to a mortally wounded man; and I had literally to jump my horse over him."

"Poor Doyle, he too; what is that Noor Mahomed says about him?"

"He was unhorsed, sir, just as we got up to the Rifles, who were scuttling away to the rear. Noor Mahomed thinks Doyle was carried away with them in the rush."

"God grant he is safe, and will turn up. But poor Henniker," added Colonel Fosbrooke, his voice sorrowful and low, "his was a mortal wound, I'm afraid."

"No doubt of it, sir; I heard the crash of the tulwar as it broke through his skull; his head was literally cut in two. Poor fellow, I owe my life to his receiving that blow. Would that I could have saved him, but I shot the fellow who killed him;

blew his brains out in fact with my revolver close to his face. Did you hear what Henniker cried, sir, when he charged forward and saved me?"

"Not I; I was assailed by half-a-dozen fellows, who were yelling like fiends; what did he say?"

"He said, 'for Eva's sake,' and the words were scarcely out of his mouth when the blow descended."

"Was he armed?"

"No, he merely had his sword hilt in his hand. His helmet had fallen off, and as I caught a glimpse of his face as he shot past me, I thought I noticed a strange expression on it."

"Poor fellow. You know his secret, Carr?"

"I know he worshipped your daughter, Colonel, and that her refusal of him preyed on his mind."

"I know it did, I know it did," groaned the old officer. "Poor boy, poor noble boy, would to God he had not fallen; God rest his soul."

"Amen," muttered Carr, removing his helmet.

When, after subsequent events the battle-field was visited, no reliable trace of the once dashing young Cavalry soldier could be found. Burial was afforded to the poor remains of our fellow-countrymen, and let us hope those of the gallant Henniker found a resting place on that field of blood. Let us leave him there in the full hope that at the last day, when the awful trump sounds, he, with others faithful, may stand forth in the blaze of heavenly light, when the angels sing the "*Adeste fideles*," and God, with the Saviour at His right side, sits in dire judgment on us all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Home from the Wars—Sorrow and joy—The welcome—Eva mourns for poor Henniker.

The war is over; Carltons Irregulars, among other corps, has returned to India, and we find them once more at Khalsapore. For their gallant conduct throughout the campaign, and for the sake of those braver hearts, the better portion of the

two squadrons present at the defeat, and who followed their officers into that veritable Hell's mouth, the petition of the whole corps asking to be sent back to their old station, has been granted. So here they are.

That was a mournful day when this gallant war-worn regiment rode into cantonments. Of the original complement of officers and five hundred sabres who had ridden out full of ardour and "*elan*" to meet the enemies of their Queen, we see now only Colonel Fosbrooke, Major Doyle, Captain Carr, and Dr. Fagan; while the number of troopers has dwindled down to a little over three hundred men. Major Doyle, who, it will be remembered, was missed, had been regularly carried away by the retrograde rush of the panic-stricken Infantry. Unhorsed, a flesh wound in his bridle arm, and finding himself amid a crowd of terrified fugitives, he endeavoured to rally the mass of disheartened and demoralized sepoys around him. Replying to his exhortations, kakee-clad Rifles and red-coated Infantry had on several occasions faced about and poured volley after volley into the raging and swarming enemy, who recoiled temporarily from the resolute front shewn by these few desperate men and their single English leader. Then stumbling on a young officer of Grenadiers similarly situated, and who was literally shedding tears of vexation at the faint-heartedness of his men, these two united their endeavours, and themselves dashing towards the foe, succeeded in getting together some three companies. Heading this handful, the two devoted men led them in a bayonet charge. With a wild shout, Rifles and red coats, shoulder to shoulder, rushed on the scething mass of Afghans, who gave way on all sides; but what could these few do against the swarms opposed to them? The success was but temporary. The enemy, led by a horde of fanatical Ghazis, returned to the charge. Our Infantry, fighting back to back, fell where they stood. Doyle received a tulwar wound on the head, and the young officer was shot dead. Seeing both their leaders down, the sepoys again lost heart, and throwing away arms and accoutrements, fled in headlong rout. Two of them, who had shewn a particularly gallant front during the rally, seized Doyle

by the hands and hurried him along with them. Thus was Doyle saved from that day's slaughter, and we find him riding in with his regiment. True, all our old friends were delighted at the return of the corps, and all, under happier circumstances, would have joined in giving the Cavalry an ovation on the occasion : but their home-coming was a sad as well as a joyous one, inasmuch as not only had the English portion of the community to mourn for the loss of three gallant spirits now lying cold in their graves in the far-off valleys of Afghanistan, but the men themselves had left brethren and kindred behind them, and perhaps, as they looked down the ranks and missed familiar faces, many a sturdy trooper cursed the day he took service under the alien's flag, and lived to return to home and comfort without, peradventure, a brother or a soul-bound friend, whose corpse was now mouldering in the lonely grave far away in the enemy's country.

"Here we are at last, Carr," said Colonel Fosbrooke, breaking a somewhat lengthy silence. "There are the minarets of the Burra Bazar shining through the trees. Thank God we at least have been spared to return."

"Thank God, indeed, Colonel," replied George, seriously ; "but 'tis a sad home-coming at the best without three good fellows who marched out with us only as if it were yesterday."

"Ah ! yes," sighed the Colonel. "I shall never cease regretting the loss of those gallant spirits, especially poor Henniker. I expect my little Eva will be terribly cut up when she hears the particulars of his death, poor boy. But what are the red coats about under the trees yonder, can you see ?"

"Some of the Caledonians, for I can make out their Tartan trews, Colonel," replied Doyle, "the new regiment, you know, who have relieved the Cardiganshire during our absence ; but here's some one riding forward."

"Good-day, gentlemen. Welcome back to India. I am Major Stuart, commanding the Wing of the Caledonians," said the horseman, trotting up and saluting the Cavalry officers, who responded heartily and courteously. "We would have met you with the band, Colonel," continued the Scots officer, "but your

friends here told us you had lost a number of officers and men, so I thought you'd prefer marching in quietly."

"I thank you for your feeling, Major," exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke. "The fact, however, of your having come out at all goes to our hearts, especially when surcharged as they now are," and the old officer grasped Major Stuart's hand and pressed it warmly.

They had now come up to the main body under the trees. Several more officers stepped forward and joined our friends, while the soldiers, honest Scotsmen for the most part, went in among the sowars, and fraternized with them to the best of their linguistic ability. The Caledonians had a tent pitched, wherein the weary travellers were entertained to *chota hazri*, pegs and cheroots, while the sowars were regaled with milk, fruit and sweetmeats, provided at the expense of the Scot's rank-and-file. This act of kindly welcome and hospitality cheered the spirits of the home-comers, and when they re-mounted, each enjoying a good cheroot, their spirits rose somewhat, and they felt lighter-hearted.

"Papa! dear papa," cried Eva, when at a turn of the road she came upon the long clanking and jingling line of mounted men. "Oh, how grateful and glad am I you are back safe and well," and, leaning from her saddle, our heroine kissed her father affectionately.

"My child, my beloved child, God bless you," cried the Colonel, returning his daughter's kiss with tears in his eyes.

Several others were with Eva. Another short halt now ensued, and many kind greetings and congratulations were exchanged. Eva and Mrs. Dalrymple presently rode down the line and shook hands with all the Native officers. Mr. Molehampton did the same. The stern war-worn Ressaldars and others were touched when the two English beauties took them by the hand, and they replied in courteous terms to Clara, who addressed to each a few well-chosen sentences in Hindoostani. At last the place of arms was reached, the regiment was broken off, and soon not a man nor horse was to be seen.

That evening, when all the worry and work of the first day

of return was over, Colonel Fosbrooke gave Eva the full particulars of Henniker's death. Copious were the tears she shed over the narrative, for she had a sincere regard for the young officer, now no more. The knowledge, too, of his love for her made the news of his tragic end all the more sad, and though she had wept over her father's letter, telling of the sad circumstance, the story possessed a mournful interest to her, and she cried very bitterly as her father now recounted in person how Henniker met his death.

"Then you think, papa," she at last said, "the locket is irretrievably lost?"

"I am afraid so, Eva."

"Poor fellow! But I have a presentiment it will come back to me eventually, papa; in fact, I feel sure it will."

"Perhaps so, my darling, but time will show."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Away South—Ootacamund—Mr. Satyn gives some news—Norah once more.

"The scenery is magnificent and the climate truly delightful, dear Eva, and you must persuade your papa to come and spend his leave here, instead of on our Hills, every stone of which you must both know by this time. Besides, it is so novel here, it is like going home. Now, dear, do come here instead of going to Mussoorie; neither of you will repent it."

Thus wrote Clara Dalrymple to Eva from the breezy heights of Ootacamund, whither she and her husband had betaken themselves a short time after the events recorded in the last chapter. Colonel Fosbrooke intended taking six months' leave to the Hills to recruit after the wear and tear of the late campaign. They had fixed on Mussoorie, and thither they were about going, when Eva received this tempting letter from Mrs. Dalrymple; and we find father and daughter this particular morning discussing the matter.

"Oh, papa, shall we go?" exclaimed Eva, charmed at the prospect of the change.

"Think you'll prefer these new Hills to Mussoorie and all its old associations, little one?"

"Its old associations I have long since done with, papa," she replied, a shade coming over her features. "But do," she added, brightening up, "let me write and tell Clara we are coming; sharing houses and expenses will be such fun; besides, papa, you will have Mr. Dalrymple to smoke with all day long, and I shall have her."

"Very well, Eva, but what about Carr? When he is able to get his leave, he was to have joined us, remember."

"Oh! I am sure he will be equally pleased at the thought of going south, papa; there'll be no difficulty about putting him up, for Clara says the house is large enough for three families."

In short, it was arranged that Colonel and Miss Fosbrooke were to go to the Neilgherries, and Carr, as soon as he could, was to join them.

"There you are, Eva," exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke, as at a turning of the road just before entering Coonoor he caught sight of some figures in the uncertain light. "Surely that is Mrs. Dalrymple."

And so it proved. Clara, looking as gorgeous as ever in a tight-fitting ulster and terai hat, had with her husband driven thus far to meet her friends. "Oh, I'm so glad!" she exclaimed joyously, kissing Eva with effusion, and all but hugging the Colonel. "We shall have such fun, and Ooty, as it is called, is such a lovely place. You and my husband, Colonel, will be able to take such long walks together, and you and I, Eva darling, will have such lots to do."

"If Ootacamund is anything like this, it will be splendid, indeed," exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke, looking around him admiringly.

"Anything like this!" echoed the generally very reticent Deputy Commissioner, "why, this is a mere foretaste: the reality has to come."

"And who are up here, Clara?" queried our heroine.

"No one we know, dear; at least none of our old acquaintances. Drummond and I, however, have been round, and we

have made several friends. But there's a lack of nothing here, from well-stocked shops with English-speaking attendants, to scandal enough to fill a three-volume novel."

"The house will be able to hold Captain Carr, I hope, Clara?" asked Eva.

"Of course; and even if it couldn't, there's Satyn's Hotel just opposite, and pretty empty now."

"It is not always so, I suppose," remarked Colonel Fossebrooke.

"No; Drummond and I went over there yesterday, making enquiries about a piano, and Mr. Satyn told us he was shortly expecting a party of tourists to stay with him."

"Tourists! What, English people?"

"Russian, I think he said; a Russian Prince and suite."

"But with an Englishwoman among them," added Mr. Dalrymple.

"Oh yes, I forgot," continued Clara, "Mr. Satyn showed me the letter. There was a postscript written in an English female hand, so different from the cramped Russo-French above, giving particular instructions to secure a good ayah."

"Humph! his wife, of course," remarked Colonel Fossebrooke. "Rather an incongruity just at this time though, a Russian with an English wife."

"Here's Coonoor," cried Clara, pointing with her tonga whip to the numerous home-like houses peeping out on all sides from wood and evergreen.

"How very pretty," exclaimed Eva, charmed with the fairy scene, "and what fragrance from that hedge. Can it be a species of heliotrope?"

"Bastard heliotrope," remarked Mr. Dalrymple, "whole lanes of it in Ooty."

"You must join the gymkhana," said Clara. "Old General Gorman, a resident and with a house full of daughters, is the Secretary, and I will get him to manage it all."

"What do you have here?"

"Any amount of lawn tennis, some badminton—fancy they play with worsted balls—lots of archery, boating on the lake, and

goodness knows what not else. I mean to take you regularly in tow, Eva, so there must be no saying no."

"I won't say no, Clara dear," replied Miss Fosbrooke, smiling lovingly in her friend's face.

In such like conversation they beguiled the way, full of joyful anticipation, and pulling up every now and then to admire any particularly beautiful bit of scenery. It was dusk when they drove up to their house, where a host of obsequious servants waited to receive them. The new arrivals were speedily shewn to their respective suits of rooms, and anon all re-assembled round the cheery dinner table, where in happy conversation the moments flew by.

On leaving the table to congregate round the blazing wood-fire in the drawing-room, they perceived Mr. Satyn hovering about the verandah: he was immediately asked to come in.

"Beg pardon, ladies and gentlemen," he said, apologetically, entering the room, "but I am in a quandary; I got this letter by the second post, it is written in French, and I can't make head or tail of it. The nearest Frenchman, Mr. Etoile, the tailor, lives miles from here, and so I thought perhaps you, gentlemen, or may be the ladies, would be kind enough to translate it," and he tendered an open letter in his hand.

"Let's see if I can help you," said Mr. Dalrymple, taking the cramped ill-written epistle, and glaring at it through his eye-glass. "I am blessed if I can make out a word; perhaps you can, Miss Fosbrooke," and he handed her the letter. Our heroine, an excellent French scholar, deciphered the epistle and proceeded to translate it to Mr. Satyn.

"It is from Adrian Lednekoff, Prince of Orgueiff, telling you of the arrival of himself, the Princess and his followers at Madras, and that they hope to be here sometime next week; you are to have rooms ready for four married couples, the Princess's companion, and two bachelors, as well as stabling for six horses, and standing room for two carriages; and you are to, set about it at once."

"Humph! I wish you joy, sir," exclaimed Colonel Fosbrooke. 'Russian swells generally have plenty of roubles with them,

not like your beggarly Germans, who don't globe-trot with more than a couple of shirt-fronts and a tooth-brush to their name. Get hold of this Prince's coat-of-arms and ask permission to hang it over your front door."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Satyn, his face beaming with joyful anticipations of the haul he would make out of the Muscovite's visit; "but there's a postscript to this letter, too," he added, pointing to the sheet Eva still held in her hands. "I did not notice it before; will you kindly translate it for me, Miss?"

Mechanically Eva turned the page, and commenced reading; but she stopped, turned pale, and sank into the nearest seat, dropping the paper on the ground.

"What's the matter, Eva?" exclaimed Clara, hastening to her friend and kneeling beside her. "What has upset you, dear?"

"Oh, Clara, that postscript!"

"What about it? what does it say, dear?"

"Something more about the ayah, but nothing what it says has affected me."

"What then, Eva?"

"Oh, the handwriting, Clara!"

"The handwriting! why, what of it, whose is it?"

"Norah Carr's."

CHAPTER XXV.

Discussing the dilemma—Eva writes and tells Carr—Speculations.

Mr. Satyn seeing something was wrong, picked up the letter, and discreetly withdrew.

"Norah Carr's?" repeated Clara, incredulously.

"Yes, Norah Carr's," said Eva emphatically, in a wailing tone.

"Oh, how very awkward and unfortunate!"

"Ah!" pithily ejaculated Colonel Fosbrooke, lighting his cheroot, "now what are we to do?"

"How strange I did not recognise it when I saw the first letter," said Clara, musingly; "but are you sure, dear, you are not mistaken?"

"Quite sure; I know her handwriting well, and there is no mistaking its bold plain characters."

"By gum! she will little expect to see us so far south, I expect," chuckled Mr. Dalrymple, cutting the end of his cheroot, "but what are we going to do?"

"Princess, quotha! She's no more Princess than I am, having her husband alive."

"Who says she's a Princess?" asked Dalrymple.

"Who says!" echoed Clara. "Well, no one says she is a real Princess, but her adding postscripts to this Grandee's letter and writing in the first person means, I take it, that she passes for the man's wife."

"Yes, I am afraid you're right, Mrs. Dalrymple," remarked Colonel Fosbrooke.

"Thing is," said Dalrymple, "if this Prince has married her, or"—

"Or what?"

"Is protecting her," said Colonel Fosbrooke, replying for his friend, who, remembering Miss Fosbrooke's presence, felt at loss for an appropriate word.

"Surely, she's not so hardened as to have represented herself as free to marry this man," said Clara, hotly.

"Take an early opportunity and see if she wears a wedding ring," suggested Mr. Dalrymple.

"How absurdly you talk, Drummond," exclaimed his wife, "when you forget that she may be wearing the ring Captain Carr put on her finger."

"Oh, ah, by the way, yes."

"Carr should be told of this, I think," remarked the Colonel.

"I will write, papa, as soon as I have seen her with my own eyes; for though not probable, it is just possible I may be mistaken as to the handwriting."

"Supposing it does turn out to be Mrs. Carr," said Clara, "will she go about as the Princess what you may call?"

"How can she, dear, if not married to him?" said Eva, quietly.

"Not at all unlikely," remarked Mr. Dalrymple. "Such

connections are winked at on the Continent. You remember that Marquise at Biarritz, Clara ?”

His wife nodded ; “but here, amongst us English, this Prince wont dare to foist her on to us as his wife !”

“How do we know but that Norah Carr has represented herself as a free woman ?” remarked Colonel Fosbrooke.

“Or, not having done so, how do we know but that the Russian, careless of her freedom or otherwise, has not married her in some obscure Greek Church, one in his own gift say, and where no questions would be asked ?” asked Mr. Dalrymple.

“Greek Church or Double-Dutch Church,” said the Colonel, “it’s a deuced awkward piece of business altogether.”

“She’ll be bold enough to claim acquaintanceship with us, I’ll be bound,” exclaimed Mrs. Dalrymple.

“If she does, what then, Clara ?” asked her husband.

“What then, Drummond ! Why we have only one course to pursue.”

“Cut her, I suppose ?”

“Well, I don’t exactly mean that, for we can’t constitute ourselves her judges.”

“Perhaps she has repented,” remarked Eva.

“And yet taken another downward step,” replied Mr. Dalrymple ; “not much repentance in that direction, I expect.”

“I confess I don’t see my way at all,” mused Colonel Fosbrooke, stirring the logs with his foot. “Carr coming too, complicates the matter even more. Are you quite sure about the handwriting, Eva ?”

“So sure, papa, that I will write to him at once and tell him.” With the words she went to an escritoire and wrote to George Carr as follows :—

“LOCHISLA, OOTACAMUND,
MADRAS PRESIDENCY,
15th May, 187 .

“MY DEAR CAPTAIN CARR,

“I have something painful to communicate, and I will do so in as few words as possible. In the postscript of a letter written by a Russian Prince, a tourist, to an hotel-keeper

here, I have recognised the handwriting to be that of your wife. The whole party will be up here shortly, and judging from the orders given, they will make a long stay. You will soon be leaving for this, so I lose no time in letting you know that you stand every chance of meeting her. It is very sad and very awkward. Will you be coming up? I can't urge you to do so now, for very naturally you may not wish to see her again; but, on the other hand, if you do come, I need not tell you how glad we shall all be to have you with us.

"With kindest regards from all,

"Believe me,

"Ever yours sincerely,

"EVANGELINE FOSBROOKE."

In due course the tourists arrived, and great was the commotion at Satyn's when the advanced guard of horses, carriages and heavy luggage first, then the travellers themselves, made their appearance at the hotel. Our friends viewed the arrival from their verandah, but the distance was too great to distinguish details. After all the uproar was over, Mr. Satyn came over to Lochisla, brimful of news.

"My guests have arrived, madame," he said, addressing Mrs. Dalrymple, who, with Eva, was walking briskly up and down the verandah preparatory to breakfast. "Such a gibberish I never heard; they talk to each other in the most unearthly language, and address me in French, which I don't understand."

"Have you managed to stow them all away comfortably?" asked Clara, amused at the hotel-keeper's perplexity about languages.

"Yes, madame, though they have modified my arrangements somewhat. Two ladies have taken the room next to the Prince. The Princess is evidently English, for she speaks it perfectly, and does all the ordering about. She is very handsome, tall, dark hair and eyes, with a grave and sorrowful look about her. There are two young children, a boy and girl, who have light hair and eyes, and these two stick to the English lady in an absurd way. The Prince himself is a jovial-looking

personage, particularly polite to the Englishwoman. These four came in one tonga, the lady driving, and when he handed her out he took off his hat. The next tonga contained a foreign lady, somewhat of an invalid evidently, for she had to be lifted out. I had the ayah ready, and when I presented her to the Princess, she immediately took her to the invalid lady and said something in French. The others are all much of a muchness. The gentlemen smoke cigarettes everlastingly. The ladies are all tall, yellow-haired, and dress very well. The invalid lady and the Englishwoman are in the room next to the Prince. He gave me this just now," and he exhibited a circular note for £200.

"As an earnest, I suppose, of their going to make a long stay," said Clara. "You think then the Englishwoman is the Princess Orgueiff?"

"Undoubtedly, madame."

"Is her manner off-hand or bold?"

"On the contrary, madame; she speaks in a very lady-like and subdued manner."

"Has she a low deep voice?" queried Eva.

"Yes," exclaimed Mr. Satyn, "particularly so; and it is a very melodious one too."

"And she wears her hair low on her forehead?" asked Miss Fosbrooke.

"Yes, in one curly mass."

"'Tis she, Clara," whispered Eva, "'tis she, beyond a doubt."

"I am going to ask rather a peculiar question, Mr. Sătyn," said Clara, a little confusedly; "we have an idea we know this lady; have you noticed if she wears a wedding ring?"

"She does, madame," replied Mr. Satyn, veiling his surprise at the lady's query. "I have had several opportunities of noticing. She has beautifully-shaped hands, but quite devoid of jewellery, except her plain wedding ring."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes, quite sure."

Mr. Satyn bid the ladies a polite good-morning, and went across to his hotel.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Tourists make themselves at home—A Russian Prince—The Iron Cross—The heights of Forbach—The Colonel of the Chasseurs d'Afrique.

The tourists seemed bent on thoroughly enjoying themselves. Riding parties, composed of the portly Russian grandee, the handsome Englishwoman, the two children on ponies, and several of their suite, would issue forth gaily from the hotel and scour the roads of the lovely hill station, returning at a spanking pace in time for baths and breakfast. Far into the night could be heard Mr. Satyn's Collard and Collard played by performers, to whom music came naturally as it does to the Germans, while every now and again, rich contralto or soprano voices would pour forth melody, entrancing to the passer-by.

His Highness of Orgueiff, unaccompanied however by his consort, now went the round, and among others he duly called on our friends. When the cards were sent in—true Russian productions, highly glazed, with the Orgueiff arms emblazoned thereon in gold, and the name, Prince Adrian Lednikoff of Orgueiff, in Russian and French in two lines underneath—Clara and Eva were very much startled.

"Command yourself, dear," whispered the elder lady, as both proceeded to the drawing-room with a certain amount of trepidation. "If we should hear anything, make no sign."

With that innate courtesy, which even a Muscovite possesses to a superior degree than we Islanders, Lednikoff advanced towards the two ladies and saluted them with a profound bow. Clara and Eva bent to the ground, and then the Prince approaching them, took them by the hand, and conducting them to a sofa, drew a chair and set himself down before them.

"Ladies," he commenced, in a strong foreign accent, "I no speak English much; I am sorry. Speak you French or German?"

Eva replied in French that they could both converse in that language, whereupon the Russian appeared greatly relieved, and began rattling away in fine style.

"I am glad," said he, " for I have rendered myself at every house according to a list given me by the master of the hotel : only one gentleman did I find at the Club who spoke German, but with difficulty ; and when I called at the Pension, presided over by a priest, one had to summon the French Gouvernante, through whose lips every word of our conversation had to pass. Therefore," he continued, with exuberant politeness, " judge of my joy at finding not only one, but two ladies, who can converse with me in my all but mother tongue."

" Your Highness knows France, then ?" queried Clara, interested in spite of herself in this handsome, courteous foreigner.

" Madame, my early days were passed in *la belle France*. I received my military education there, only to turn my knowledge so gained against her in after days," and a shade came over his countenance.

" How was that ?" asked Eva.

" I held a commission in the German army, and I served throughout the Franco-German War of 1870-71, and this," he added, handling a decoration he wore among several ribbons on the breast of his tight frock coat, " is the Iron Cross of King William, pinned on by the Kaiser himself at Versailles."

" Indeed ! Prince," exclaimed Clara, always so enthusiastic about such matters ; " will you narrate to us the particular incident which gained you this decoration, which I believe answers to our Victoria Cross ?"

" But certainly, madame ; I was in command of a battery of Artillery under General Von Goeben. It was at the battle of Forbach. Our Infantry, with difficulty, were pushing the French through a wood, to which they held tenaciously, and where, soon afterwards, they made a desperate stand. My battery, and another commanded by a Silesian Major, were on the low ground beneath where the battle was raging. We saw the French were rallying, and we knew we would be of value if we could get up. I was examining the precipitous sides of the heights before us with my field glasses, and up which our Infantry had climbed. I discovered a goat-path between two clefts. Riding forward, I saw it was just possible to take

guns up it. Dashing back to the batteries, I placed myself at their head; the German gunners followed without hesitation; the path was fearfully narrow and steep, the noble horses strained and tugged, while the brave gunners put their shoulders to the wheels, and saved the guns from toppling over into the precipice beneath. At last, after incredible exertion and difficulty we gained the crest and hastened to unlimber. We were not a bit too quick. The brave French, sorely pressed as they were by our Infantry, no sooner saw us, then they hurled a regiment of Turcos at the guns. Folly, mad folly, and so characteristic of the gallant but shortsighted nation we were fighting. The Turcos came on resolutely at the charge, with sword bayonets fixed, drums beating, and colours flying. In another instant they would have been among us, bayonetting my breathless gunners, when at this supreme moment we were ready, and then from right to left our guns opened on the advancing French, three deep, and not fifty yards from our muzzles. But, ladies, it was terrible. Each gun fired one round, and the smoke clearing away, we looked for that gallant regiment. Where were they? We saw before us a long heap of dead and dying, with here and there a man erect gazing at us with protruding eye-balls. Our discharge had annihilated the brave Turcos; so limbering up, we swept over the death and devastation we had created, and again opening a flank fire on the French, we decided the fortunes of the day. For this act, ladies, did I and every surviving officer and man of those two batteries gain this Iron Cross."

"Oh, I remember reading of the exploit now," exclaimed Clara, all aglow with excitement, "what a noble daring act. I admire your bravery, Prince."

"Ah, madame," replied Lednikoff, "I have reason to remember that day with sorrow;" and again a shade came over his countenance.

"Why so?" enquired Eva, gently.

"I will tell you. After galloping our guns over the dead and dying Turcos, and when later on in the day we had got on to more open ground, we were charged by a corps of *Chasseurs*

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"Why so?" enquired Eva, gently.

"I will tell you. After galloping our guns over the dead and dying Turcos, and when later on in the day we had got on to more open ground, we were charged by a corps of *Chasseurs*

d'Afrique. More madness, more folly. On came these gallant fellows, the flower of the French Cavalry; our shot tore through them, tumbling them down by dozens. Still the remnant came straight at us. Led by an officer mounted on a powerful charger, these few stood our second volley, and now reduced to a mere handful, but with that gallant spirit still at their head, they were among us before we could re-load. The gunners drew their swords and met the onslaught bravely. The officer made straight at me, but before he came within sword's length, I shot him through the chest with my revolver, and he fell at my feet. His followers were beaten off. 'Water, for the love of the Sacred Mother,' moaned the wounded officer. I stooped over him, and applied my bottle to his lips—his eyes were fixed on me. 'Lednikoff, you know me not,' he at length faintly uttered. Surprised, I removed his helmet, and to my horror recognised my quondam fellow-pupil at St. Cyr, Achille De Vaudret, my bosom companion of twenty years ago! 'You, in this cursed uniform, Adrian?' he whispered, reproachfully and huskily, for life was fast ebbing. 'My poor Achille,' I replied, 'God wither my hand that brought you low; how shall I ever have peace again?' 'Fear not,' he replied, 'tis the fortune of war, and I fully forgive you; take this cross in recognition of my love,' and he caused me to detach a gold cross he wore round his neck and next to his skin. With these words he fell back and died. This incident, ladies, always casts a shadow over my life, even in its gayest moments, and at times makes me very sad," and the Russian's voice grew low and tremulous as he concluded his narrative.

"And the cross?" asked Clara, under her breath.

"I found it inscribed with the name 'Nannette;' from enquiry it turned out that Nannette was the name of poor DeVaudret's wife, and she had given him this cross the day he had ridden out of Nancy to join MacMahon's army. I returned the cross to the poor widow anonymously."

"How good and feeling of you," murmured both ladies, moved by the pathos of the story.

"But I must not trouble you with my self so long," rejoined Lednikoff, rising. "When the Princess is able to issue invitations, I hope you, ladies, will honor us with your presence;" and shaking hands and bowing profoundly, he left.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The recognition in the church—Wife or no wife—George Carr's reply—Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

"'Tis she, Clara," exclaimed Mr. Dalrymple, throwing his leg over his horse and descending to mother earth with a thud, a morning or two after.

"How do you know, Drummond?" asked his wife excitedly, who, with Eva, was busy preparing *chota hasiri*.

"I and the Colonel were riding past the church, and we thought we'd step in and look at it, as we perceived the door was open. A horse, with a lady's saddle, was standing at the porch, so in we walked. A woman in a riding habit and terai hat was kneeling at the altar, her head bowed down on the rails. Not wishing to disturb her, we were on the point of retreating, when the devotee arose, turned round, and looked us full in the face."

"Well, did you speak to her?"

"Speak to her!" echoed Dalrymple. "No, we were both so 'garbrowed' that we skedadled out as quickly as possible."

"Did papa not essay to say anything?" asked Eva.

"Your father, my dear Miss Fosbrooke, is an officer of approved bravery, ready to charge an army while the whole world wondered; but in this case I strongly suspect he was the greater coward of the two. We literally tumbled out of the church together."

"How absurd," remarked Eva, smiling and amused in spite of herself; "but where did you leave papa?"

"At the Club. He went in to look at the English papers and get a pick-me-up of some sort after his adventure."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Clara, "the idea of you two men getting so flurried at the sight of her. How did she look?"

"Look ! she looked straight at us."

"Oh, you stupid, Drummond ! I mean how did she look ? Happy or unhappy, bold or subdued, or what ?"

"Oh, is that what you mean ? Well, from the hurried glance I got of her, she looked right enough, but very resigned, and her eyes had a mournful expression in them."

"Oh, here's papa," exclaimed Eva, running out into the verandah. "Papa," she continued, kissing the Colonel, "you've seen her ?"

"Yes, dear ; I and Dalrymple saw her clearly enough, and there's no mistake about it. That woman is Norah Carr—at least what we knew to be Norah Carr."

"But why did neither of you address her ?"

"Address her ! Think, my love, of the attending circumstances. Gad ! you could have knocked me down with a feather when she turned round from the altar and looked at us in the way she did."

"Poor thing," remarked Mrs. Dalrymple, musingly. "Goodness knows whether we are right in pre-judging her as we do. She must be case-hardened indeed to enter a church if she is still sinning."

"I don't believe she is, Mrs. Dalrymple," remarked Colonel Fosbrooke.

"Then what do you make of it at all ?"

"She must either think that Carr is dead, or that they have been divorced, and we have heard nothing of it."

"Scarcely possible, Fosbrooke," remarked Mr. Dalrymple, handing his cup for more tea. "Carr's name would have been shewn had he been killed in the war ; and had there been a suit, it would have appeared in the papers."

"Then there's only one other solution to the thing," said the Colonel.

"And that is ?"

"She's not married at all, and that the worst exists."

"Then how do you account for seeing her in the church then, Colonel Fosbrooke ?" asked Clara, hotly.

"Oh, Clara," said Eva, gently, "didn't Magdalene weep at

Jesus' feet ? The House of God is open to all. This poor soul, repenting of her fallen state, and finding her burden heavy to bear, must have remembered the Saviour's invitation and gone to Him for rest. For my part, I honor her for it."

"Well, it's as curious a piece of business as I have ever come across," said Colonel Fosbrooke, rising and lighting a huge barrel-shaped Trichy. "Oh, by the by, I forgot to say," he added, "there's to be a gymkhana this afternoon ; the notice is up at the Club."

"Then we'll all go," replied Mrs. Dalrymple. "Very likely the Russian party will be there, and we shall be able to learn something."

That day's post brought George Carr's reply to Eva's letter, and this is what he wrote :—

' KHALSAPORE,
" 29th May 187 .

" MY DEAR MISS FOSBROOKE,

"Thank you very much for your truly kind and feeling letter. I hasten to inform you that the coincidence you mention will not alter my plans in the least ; she is dead to me, and her presence will make no difference to me—at the same time you must understand I am deeply grateful and mindful of the delicate motive which prompted you to write and tell me about it. I hope to leave this for the South in a few days. The new man, Leveson Power, has joined, but having had a bad touch of fever coming up the river, is not quite fit yet. I am looking forward with the greatest gusto to joining your circle. Remember me very kindly to all, and believe me,

" Dear Miss Fosbrooke,

" Ever sincerely and gratefully yours,

" GEORGE CARR."

" 'There you are," remarked Colonel Fosbrooke, when Eva read the above aloud ; "you see he's not going to make a fuss about it. All's well that ends well ; depend upon it they'll take no notice of each other, and it wont do for us to mix ourselves up in the business."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The recognition at the Gymkhana—The Rendezvous—False Purposes—The Truth.

It was a grand gymkhana day, and all Ooty was congregated on the ground, while crowds of gaily-dressed natives thronged the course to see the tamasha. Our friends drove down early to secure good places, and they were fortunate enough to obtain seats in the second row.

"I wonder if they will be here," said Eva in a whisper to Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Sure to be, dear. Drummond," she added, motioning her husband to her with her sunshade, "find out, dear, if the Russian party are to be here."

Obedient Drummond accosted one of the stewards, and shortly returned to his wife's side.

"Yes," he whispered, "these couches in the front row are for them."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Clara under her breath, "we shall be close enough to them."

Guests began to arrive in shoals, and the tents were pretty nearly filled when the fast trot of several horses and rolling of wheels caused a commotion in the well-dressed assemblage, and whispers of "the Russian Prince, the Muscovites," announced the arrival of the strangers. All stood up as the party entered the tent, escorted to their seats by one of the stewards. His Highness of Orgueiff walked first, supporting on his arm a tall, fair-haired woman, who moved with difficulty. She was gorgeously attired, and wore a profusion of jewellery.

"Oh, the invalid," muttered Colonel Fosbrooke to Dalrymple. Following the Prince and this lady, came a woman of far different type, leading by the hand two fair, flaxen-haired children. Yes, it was Norah Carr beyond a doubt! There was no mistaking that noble figure, that queenly gait. Dressed quietly but with exquisite taste in black silk trimmed with red, a black velvet toque with a small red feather and a half veil reaching just above her sad and pensive mouth, she looked indeed every inch fit to be a

Princess. Her features were much softened, and there was now a sad sweet look in her eyes that enhanced her beauty. The Prince was most courteous to her: relieving her of the two children, whom he seated next to the invalid lady, with courtly grace he took her by the hand and seated her at the further end of the sofa. The other ladies were taken care of by their attendant cavaliers. The women were all tall, florid and fair-haired, with remarkably redundant figures, and the prettiest of feet and hands; the gentlemen all the world resembled so many crosses between a music master and a German Hussar: all tall, fair, broad-chested, clean-shaved, and well-dressed, each one exhibiting ribbons of various orders on his breast. The Prince, after seating his charges, turned to the seats behind him and bowed repeatedly, which the assembly duly acknowledged. Perceiving Clara and Eva seated just behind him, the Prince addressed them cordially in French. Turning to the invalid lady, he said something to her in Russian, which resulted in an introduction. The Prince pronounced our friends' names, asking them to know the Princess Olga Orgueiff. Scarcely had they exchanged bows, when Norah turned and looked at her quondam acquaintances: Clara's and her eyes met; the gaze was steady for some moments: Norah then looked at Eva; she too met her glance, but the gentler spirit of our heroine caused her to soon look down. Not a word was said on either side, and our friends seemed nowhere nearer the truth than before. The gymkhana proceeded; event succeeded event. The Prince applauded continuously; the Russian ladies laughed immoderately at the sack, chatty, and egg races, and astonished the Ooty world by smoking cigarettes, and the generous display they one and all made of their really handsome ankles. The festivities drawing to a close and the band striking up "God Save the Queen," people began to leave. As Norah rose to accompany the Russians, she bent over to Eva and whispered, "You know not my emotions in seeing you here, dear Miss Forbrooke; I never expected to meet any Khalsapore acquaintances so far south. I am most anxious to talk to you both. Will you meet me to-morrow morning by the lake at about eight o'clock?"

All this was said in a voice so low, and with such a ring of sadness in it, that Eva's generous heart was stirred. Full of forgiveness and charity, she hurriedly squeezed Norah's hand and promised she and Clara would be at the rendezvous at the time appointed.

It was a bright, beautiful morning as Clara and Eva slowly drove round the lake looking for Norah. They found her off her horse and on her knees gathering some wild flowers that had caught her eye. Rising at the sound of wheels, she turned and confronted them.

"Dare I ask for your hands?" she asked, her own cased in a handsome tanned gauntlet, half stretched out.

"Certainly," said Clara, her heart won by the earnest pleading look in the upturned face as she reached down and pressed Norah's hand. "Come up, and we will drive a little further on where there are some seats in a nice retired spot under the trees." Resigning her Arab to the horsekeeper, Norah got into the phaeton, when Eva pressed her hand warmly, she too unaccountably affected by the look in Norah's eyes.

"Eva," said Norah, gently, "and you, Mrs. Dalrymple," taking a seat between them on the rustic bench, "are very kind in granting me this interview; believe me, I am overjoyed to see you once more. It reminds me of other days when I might have been happy and at peace."

"There is always happiness for those who seek it at the right source, Norah," replied Eva, kindly.

"Oh yes, but when one is unworthy and the Giver of happiness says you nay, where is one to look for peace?"

"No one is unworthy who repents," said Clara. "Now, judging from your looks, one would think you had repented, and were more at peace now than ever you were before, but"—

"But what?"

"The circumstances by which you are surrounded show this cannot be."

"I acknowledge my sin, Mrs. Dalrymple, and it has ever been before me from that day to this; my life since that day has been one long repentance."

"And yet you persist in leading the life you do," said Clara, severely.

"What would you have me do? With my sin ever present to my mind, I could not represent myself as a living lie and associate myself with honest people. I must earn my bread; true I might have gone back to the stage, but I feel that the old life would prove distasteful."

"Do you call the life you are leading a reputable one?" asked Eva.

"Not as the world goes; but have I a right to be particular?"

"Then why adhere to it, dear?" asked Eva. "Your husband settled a sufficient sum for your support?"

"Eva," said Norah, impressively, "I feel I had no right to that money. Every farthing of it I am putting by for the ultimate benefit of him who gave it."

"Yes, because you have lots from other sources," put in Clara.

"From Prince Lednikoff?" "Yes," replied Norah, gently, "I have nothing to complain of. He is very kind and liberal, and the duties I have to carry out are not very hard."

"Hard! I should not suppose so," remarked Clara. "The wonder is how you bring yourself to perform them. Have you told Prince Orguieff of your antecedents?"

"I have," Mrs. Dalrymple, "when I answered his advertisement in person in Paris, I told him I could give him no references as to character; I gave him my history, and said if he would take me as I am, I would endeavour to render him every satisfaction and be of assistance to him in his contemplated Indian tour."

"And, knowing your husband to be alive, how had you the hardihood to accompany Prince Orguieff out here and run the risk of meeting him again, Norah?" asked Eva, seriously.

"As I have told you before, I am obliged to look for my daily bread," replied Norah.

"And eat it in gilded infamy, as you are now doing," said Clara, in condemnatory tones, and tapping the ground with her pretty foot.

"You use hard terms, Mrs. Dalrymple," said Norah, gently; "but I must not complain of them."

"Forgive me if I appear harsh," replied Clara, frankly, "but you are made up of incongruities. We find you persisting in living a life of sin, yet we hear of your being seen at your devotions in a church all by yourself. Your manner, your looks, belie your surroundings; your very words, too, lead one to suppose you are repentant, and yet"—

"And yet what, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"You are not Prince Orguieff's lawful wife."

"Oh!" exclaimed Norah, convulsively, "a light breaks on me now; I can now account for it. Oh, Mrs. Dalrymple and Eva," she continued, rising and standing before the two ladies, while tears streamed down her cheeks, "I have sinned once and once only; you both think I have sinned again."

"Are you not supposed to be the Princess Orguieff?" exclaimed Clara, excitedly rising and grasping Norah's hands.

"Oh no! ten thousand times no!" cried the poor girl, "I am but governess to his children. Sinner as I have been, I have sinned no more," and she sank down on the seat and hid herself on Eva's bosom.

"Oh, my darling, my darling," sobbed Eva, mingling her tears with those of the penitent on her breast, "we have judged you wrongly. Thank God, things are not as they seemed to be."

"Poor Norah," said Clara, her own voice choked with emotion, and embracing the poor outcast in her turn, "forgive us, dear, but appearances are so against you. All Ooty think you to be the Princess, and of course we went with the stream. How is it you are with them, dear? Which is the Princess, and what is your history since we last saw you?"

"I will tell you my history," said Norah, drying her

CHAPTER XXIX.

Norah's Story.

"After that last harrowing interview with my husband, and at which you were present, dear Eva," commenced Norah, "I left the house with an agony of desolation at my heart. A *baygari*, whom I found in the stables, accompanied me, carrying a tin box, the first I could lay hands on, and in which I packed a few

articles of clothing. Once out of the compound I knew not what to do, where to turn. I thought of going to the Molehamptons and asking their advice, but my shame prevented me ; so I walked on under the blazing sun in an aimless manner till I recognised the road to be the one leading to the river. On I went ; I had snatched up an umbrella as I left my house, and this I found of the greatest use. The natives stared at me, wondering at the unwonted sight, and some questioned the *baygari* : I don't know what explanation he gave. Several of my acquaintances passed me, either riding or driving, but I kept my eyes fixed on the ground, and no one spoke to me. I had not gone very far before I felt ready to drop. The awful heat of the sun, from which I was only protected by my terai hat and thin silk umbrella, seemed to pierce me to the marrow. My shoes, a pair of thin high-heeled ones, soon became cut to pieces, and I sat down on the roadside and cried from sheer misery. Of the drivers of a string of carts, which now came crawling and creaking up, I recognised in one a former bheestic of ours. This man, wonderment depicted on his face, came to me, and, making a salaam, asked me something in Hindee. 'Durryao' was all I could say, pointing in the direction of the river. He understood me, for turning his cart round he brought it to a standstill before me, and arranging the straw inside it, he invited me to get in. How sweet is the rudest sympathy ! I could have cried out all my sorrows into this poor native's ear. He evidently had a heart, for I was able to understand his asking me not to cry. We reached the steamer place in due time. A steamer was moored there, on the point of starting down the river. Several Mooltan and Dera Moolla people were on board, but news of my sin had travelled, as I learnt, when two ladies whom I had voyaged up with, turned from me as I passed them on my way to my cabin. Truly was I now paying for my crime. Another mortification was in store for me : when dinner was announced, I asked for mine to be handed into my cabin. 'Hookum nahin,' replied the servant, whereupon I told him to send the European steward to me. I repeated my request. 'Very sorry, madame,' was his reply, 'but 'tis against the rules of the Company, unless a passenger

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is sick.' I felt faint and hungry, so smoothing my hair, I went to the cuddy table. Directly the other ladies saw me about to sit down, they, with several gentlemen, got up and left their seats. The Captain and the others sat aghast. Horrified and humiliated, I fled back to my cabin. In a short time some food was brought to me, and in the evening the Captain sent word that he wished to speak to me. I went; he addressed me very kindly. He said he had ascertained the reason of my being so shunned. He felt very sorry for me, but that conventionalisms must be respected. He advised me not to attempt coming to the table again, and that when on deck I had better keep apart from the other first class passengers. 'As far as I am concerned, Mrs. Carr,' he said, 'I would not have the slightest objection to your appearance at the table; you have paid your fare, and we, as public carriers, have no business to look into our passengers' private circumstances; besides, it is not for us to set ourselves up as judges of our fellowmen; that's my opinion, but it may not be that of the others. Having all these passengers, therefore, and seeing that your presence is distasteful to them, I am constrained to say to you what I have;' he took my hand, pressed it warmly, and left me. Well I will not trouble you with anything more about my voyage home, suffice to say my demon haunted me the whole way. I had not set foot an hour on board the B. I. S. N. ship *Ghazeepore*, and was complimenting myself, that there was no one among the passengers who knew me and my wretched story, and we were on the point of leaving, when a boat came alongside, and out of her stepped Mrs. Christy; you both know her. That I was to have a repetition of the misery of the down river voyage was soon very evident. That afternoon, while in my cabin, the stewardess came and requested me to move to a cabin further forward; knowing the cause, what could I do but obey? I was near the engines now, and the smell inseparable from that part of the ship was at first very hard to bear. In due course I got accustomed to it, and to while away the time that hung so heavily, I would step out of my cabin, and leaning on the rails, look down on the mass of machinery

revolving and grinding away beneath me. Somehow the officers of the ship had got hold of my story, for now I had to suffer persecution from one of them. 'I know all about you, Mrs. Carr,' he told me one evening, when I had gone upstairs on deck to breathe a little fresh air. 'I know all about you, and the reason of the other folks shunning you.' What could I say? What could I do? He was kind, civil and sympathetic, and his companionship was a solace, till one evening while standing by my side, he attempted to put his arm round my waist. I resented this by pushing him from me and taking refuge in my cabin. He came to my door shortly afterwards, and begged hard for forgiveness. I told him he had insulted me, whereupon he laughed in my face and said I had no right to feel insulted. This angered me so that I went straight to the Captain and complained to him. He looked at me from head to foot and expressed his wonderment at my audacity. 'Why, you have no moral ground on which to take you stand,' he said; you've been up to hanky-panky tricks ashore, as we all know by this time, and it's not surprising for any one to conclude you're game for any larks afloat; so no more of your complaints, young woman,' and he motioned me away with his hand! His wife was on board; I thought I could appeal to her. I sent word by the stewardess, asking for an interview, but the answer was, the Captain's lady declined to see me. And so it went on; humiliation on humiliation, mortification on mortification; my sin found me out a thousand times a day. Truly was I made to feel what an outlaw, what a castaway my own imprudence had made me. At last we steamed up the Thames, and in due course I found myself once more in England. Where could I go? to former friends and acquaintances? No! I bethought me of the stage. My old theatrical patrons, mindful of how but a short time ago I had brought them bumper houses and large returns, would doubtlessly jump at my services. Among these, the taint in my character, even when known, would be of no account. I knew only too well that many of the women I had seen figuring on the stage as models of virtue and morality, were like me, vile and corrupt within. But the idea of walking the boards in my

degraded state, where I once was wont to appear at least as an honest girl, proved very distasteful, and I loathed the thought I had some little money, but it would not last for ever. I was determined not to touch a farthing of his allowance. I went to an old legal acquaintance, told him all, authorized him to acknowledge the remittances, and gave him orders to arrange for the accumulation of the money in the donor's name. I then advertised, shewing me prepared to give lessons in music and singing, or ready to hire myself out as governess or companion. I received many replies, and made as many appointments. I was asked to sing and play, and one father of a family, more erudite than the others, went so far as to ask me a number of questions in geography and history. But each interview ended with a demand for certificates or references. Of course I had none to shew; so I met with disappointment everywhere. I tried the publishers, and succeeded in getting work sufficiently remunerative to dispel fears of my little stock of money melting away. I occasionally got engagements to play the piano at panoramas, clairvoyance entertainments, and such like, where the music is of secondary importance and the player not seen. At a panorama of the Indian mutiny, I played the 'Delhi' March. When the performance was over, and I about leaving the hall for my lodgings, he, my destroyer, who was standing by the entrance, accosted me. 'I could not be mistaken,' he said, in his usual easy accents, 'no one but my Norah knows that March.' All the fury my nature is capable of, boiled up at the sight of that hateful being. Here he was, my seducer, my destroyer. True, I had no one to blame but myself; but, oh, the remembrance of the days of woe, remorse and humiliation I had passed since that fatal evening, when I threw discretion to the winds and surrendered myself in guilty passion to this man, was terribly present to me now. I upbraided and reproached him with all the force of language my tongue had command of. I told him of my blighted life, my ruined character, and the utter misery of my existence since that awful day. He treated all lightly, pooh-poohed every thing I said, and ended by imploring me to come and live with him. I furiously spurned the idea; he caught hold of me

by the arm; I struggled with him, and finding my strength failing, I cried for help; some of the bystanders interfered; I was released; they told him to be off, but as he turned to leave the spot, he said he loved me too well to lose me, and swore a fearful oath that he would search London through for me and not let me escape him a second time. I looked on him with the utmost aversion and horror; knowing his character, and perceiving that all his sensual love had been rekindled, I resolved to fly. By a late train that night I left London. I went to Paris and was casting about for employment there, when I saw an advertisement in one of the papers in French and English, as coming from a Russian Prince, who, with his Princess, children and party, were contemplating a lengthy tour in India and the East. The Princess, who was an invalid, was in quest of an English lady who could speak French and be to her a companion, and moreover governess to her two young children. Applicants were to apply in person at the Hotel Orgueiff. I went. I was thoroughly cowed and broken down now; I had been severely punished; purer thoughts now began to reign within me. I now began to have God before my eyes, and since I came to Paris I found it a mournful but exquisite solace to enter at twilight the dim old churches, and there with my head bent low on the altar rails, pour out my griefs to God, and ask for His peace. India too began to have an yearning sort of significance for me. I longed to return. Not till I had been praying in those Parisian churches did I realize the responsibilities of my mission as a wife and the terrible depth of the pit I had fallen into. With these feelings came one of great and tender love for my husband. I panted for an opportunity to throw myself at his feet and supplicate for his pardon. So I went to the Hotel Orgueiff. I saw the Prince and Princess, she, next to whom I was sitting this afternoon. All seemed satisfactory. My knowledge of French was sufficient for their wants. I was asked to sing and play; they expressed themselves pleased. The salary was settled, and I was waiting in suspense for the inevitable demand for references, when the Russian politely offered me his arm as the Princess gave me her hand to kiss. 'A word,

your Highness, I said,' hesitatingly, 'you have not asked for references or certificates.' 'Ah, Madame Carr,' she said, 'we are not particular about such things in our country; a person is honest and good till found out to be the contrary, but surely there can be nothing against you.' Resuming my seat by her side at her bidding, with the Prince sitting opposite, I quietly and succinctly told her all. 'If madame and you, monseigneur, will believe in the sincerity of my contrition and take me as I am, I will endeavour to serve you faithfully and honestly. If however you consider me unworthy of your patronage, I have but to ask your pardon for this intrusion and leave to withdraw.' My surprise was great when, instead of receiving any sort of rebuff, the Princess, with tears in her eyes, took me to her bosom and the Prince stroked my head as one would that of a little child. They both told me to be of good cheer; that so far from being prejudiced by the tale of woe they had just heard, it had the opposite effect, and they liked me all the more for my candour. Why trouble you with more? I was duly installed in my new situation. We have been touring all over the East this last nine months. They are very kind to me. From here we go north to Simla, then Cashmere, and my daily prayer is that God in His great mercy and commiseration for one of His most contrite of sinners will, at some time or another, let me confront my darling injured husband, when, no matter be it alone or in a crowd, in church, out in public, anywhere and under whatever circumstances, I say, only let me meet him, and I will throw myself at his feet and let him trample on my poor bleeding heart."

CHAPTER XXX.

The conversation by the lake—Are the bonds eternal set?

She ceased, and the tell-tale quiver at the corners of the sweet mouth and the tumultuous heavings of her bosom shewed the emotion of the heart within.

"There! I have told you all," she said, after a moment's pause. "Think of me as you may; but oh, be charitable and do not withhold your sympathy. I know I'm polluted, every thing that is vile, that I have no right to be speaking with you now.

A great gulf yawns between such as I am and the rest of the world, who like me, have not fallen."

"Not only our sympathy, but our love shall you have, dear," Clara exclaimed, fondly caressing the head bowed on her own ample bosom. "Eva and I will be your fast friends, for truly if there be penitents in this world, and deserving of our Saviour's teaching, you are indeed one of them."

"Cheer up, Norah dear," added Eva, holding her hand and pressing it affectionately. "There is no cloud without its silver lining, and I dare say there is peace in store for you, especially as you know where to seek it."

"Peace with God! Yes, dear friends," replied Norah, "but oh, I yearn to make peace with the one I have so grossly wronged. Oh, Mrs. Dalrymple, do you think I may meet him one of these days? and, having met him, have I any chance of his hearing me? Would he not spurn me from him as an object unworthy of his notice?"

"You love your husband dearly, Norah?" asked Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Love him! I worship him," she replied, hysterically. "Would he were on this spot now that I might kneel to him and implore him to let me be his servant, his slave. Oh, you who are ignorant of remorse, know not my feelings. If a long life of regret and repentance will obtain the Father's forgiveness for my one great sin, truly I need not fear the future. Repenting, I am sincerely and humbly; but I want to atone; I want to devote the rest of my days to him as his veriest menial. Oh, God Almighty, grant this my prayer!" Saying this, poor Norah threw herself in an agony of grief on her knees and prayed.

Her two friends looked on in silence. Their thoughts were busy. Here at their feet was one of themselves, a beautiful accomplished woman, but, alas! with the scarlet letter on her brow. They knew she had sinned, knew she had passed that mystic boundary which there is no re-crossing. They beheld in her an outcast, one to touch whom, according to the world's code, was pollution, corruption, contamination. She had flown in the face of one of God's sternest laws, and had fallen: fallen from the proud

eminence of virtuous wife and matron upon which it is woman's dearest object to preserve her footing. They saw she was penitent, deeply penitent. Sinner once, but no more sinning ; to this poor worm kneeling before them did their two good hearts go out, and as both thought of their own unblemished names, they felt how precious a jewel they had in their keeping, and they half realized what it must be to lose it.

"And you hope to see your husband, Norah ?" asked Eva, after a pause.

"Oh, I do ! I cherish the hope and pray for the day when that hope may be fulfilled," she said, now rising to her feet and drying her eyes.

"Come here, dear Norah," exclaimed Clara Dalrymple, extending her arms ; "come here, dear, and I will tell you something." Again taking the poor head to her breast, she said "I have a piece of good news for you, your husband will be here very shortly."

Norah started from Clara's embrace and glared wildly at her ; she could not realize what she had heard ; the prospect of soon seeing her husband, oh how yearned for and dreamt of, seemed too good to be true. "What !" she gapsed, pressing her hands to her throbbing bosom, "what ! my husband to be here shortly ! and I to see him ! Oh, do not deceive me or needlessly raise my hopes ; say those sweet words again," she continued, in a low agitated voice.

"It is happily true, dear," now interposed Eva. "He will be here soon."

"And oh, what may I hope for ?" exclaimed Norah, looking wistfully from one to the other. "Will he see me ? will he talk to me ? or will the remembrance of the cruel wrong I worked him prevent him from meeting me ? Oh speak, tell me," she wailed in agonized accents.

"We must hope for the best, dear," replied Clara, soothingly ; "but it wont be prudent to build on too much."

"Oh ! what do you mean ?"

"That there is no knowing what Captain Carr's feelings may be."

"You think then he will spurn me; withhold his forgiveness!"

"I don't say that, Norah. In all probability his good heart will induce him to forgive you, but"—

"But what?"

"Don't count on his taking you to him again; for look you, Norah, to speak in plain terms and with no intent to pain you, few men forgive what you have done to downright condoning of the offence. I don't want to preach, dear, but husbands, however unfaithful they may be in thought and deed, are precious jealous of their wives and their rectitude; and with all my experience of life, I can't point to a single case wherein a husband has received his wife back after she had proved unfaithful to him—such requiring a tremendous moral effort."

"Here then is death to all the fond hopes I indulged in on your telling me of his speedy arrival," said Norah, in sobbing accents; "but surely when I throw myself at his feet, and he learns that with that one fatal exception I have been true to him, he will have mercy?"

"That's just it, Norah," replied the practical and plain-spoken Clara; "that one fatal exception, as you rightly term it, does all the mischief, and its existence stands in the way of reconciliation in a case like yours."

"But you two, you who have not committed my terrible mistake, you are merciful; you are kind; you have taken me by the hand, kissed me, and mingled your tears with mine; you have made all these concessions! Wont he then relent?"

"Quite a different matter, Norah. Your husband is your earthly lord; he stands to you in the light of your Heavenly Father. You swore at His altar to be true and faithful to your husband, to cling to him, and him only, come weal, come woe. In sinning against him, you sinned against God. We are your friends, nothing more: beyond outraging the decencies of the society in which we move, you have not offended against us. We find you penitent, humble, and with an honest desire to atone for the past; seeing this, we are Christians enough to sympathize and commiserate with you; but with your husband, dear, the case

is far different, it is one of the most serious import. All we can do is to pray to God to put it into his heart to hear your supplication, and cause him to open his arms and take you to him again."

Poor girl! she listened to Clara's over-true words with dilated eyes and palpitating bosom. Alas! every sentence carried weight; she knew that once fallen, how well-nigh hopeless an idea it was to regain her lost place in her husband's heart, and that all depended on the very being who had most cause to complain of her sin—her wronged and injured husband. As the probability of her soon seeing him came nearer, the hopelessness of her case became terribly apparent. Why should he take her, a polluted woman, an unfaithful and adulterous wife, back to his bosom? and yet—

"Kind friends," she said, taking a hand of each and looking at them through her tears, "pity my unfortunate state, and give me your aid in the task before me. As you hope for mercy hereafter, help me in my distress. Prepare him, tell him I am sorry, sorry from the bottom of my heart, and though I have sinned both against Heaven and before my husband, and am no more worthy to be called his wife, yet tell him his erring Norah is waiting to cast herself at his feet and implore his mercy and forgiveness on her bended knees. Ask him to grant me one interview, and for the rest I will place my trust in God. Will you promise me this much?"

"We promise, dear," exclaimed both ladies, moved to tears by the poor sinner's pathetic eloquence.

CHAPTER XXXI.

George Carr's arrival—Clara and Eva plead—Misgivings—Success.

"That she's really and truly penitent, there does not appear to be the shadow of a doubt, Carr," said Colonel Fosbrooke to his old friend, as they drove along the road between Coonoor and Ooty. "Mrs. Dalrymple and Eva have seen a good deal of her, and they both say, her remorse and repentance are very genuine."

"I am glad to hear it, Colonel," replied George Carr, gravely; "such feelings will tend to help her in making her peace with God, which she must need."

"Aye, indeed, but the ladies will be able to tell you all about her."

A warm welcome awaited George at Lochisla; many were the questions asked and answered on both sides, and the time passed pleasantly in social intercourse and friendly conversation.

George, now a Major, was looking extremely well. The bullet wound received on the disastrous day of poor Henniker's death had not disfigured him, nor had his other wounds done him any lasting mischief. His vastly improved looks were chiefly attributable to his now confirmed temperate habits, to which he had rigidly adhered ever since the memorable day when Eva, like an angel of goodness, had extracted from him a promise of reformation in this and other respects. His great sorrow, however, had imparted a grave and melancholy character to his features, which enhanced, rather than marred, their undeniably noble cast. The gravity and sadness of his countenance is particularly marked this evening as we find him after dinner seated between Clara and Eva, the two other gentlemen having remained in the dining-room, ostensibly to smoke, but really to give George an opportunity of hearing all about his wife from the two ladies.

"Strange fatality that should bring her up here, and in such company, and when I also am on the spot," murmured Carr, lighting his cigar; "truly God's ways are inscrutable."

"We are taught to believe that God orders all for our good, Major Carr," remarked Eva.

"True, Miss Fosbrooke, but sometimes it's hard to see it. In this case, for instance, what earthly good can come of our being thrown together in the same place, after?"—

"After what has happened, you would say?" queried Clara, gently.

These two good women had already found that the task they had undertaken promised to be harder than they anticipated. At dinner, when during which some little allusion had

been made to the subject so near their hearts, they noticed with concern a hard set look come over George Carr's countenance, which augured ill for the success of their merciful design; and they had exchanged glances sufficiently full of meaning to convey that their fears were mutual; and now, woman-like, they were feeling their way, both generously intent on the purpose they had in view.

"Precisely, Mrs. Dalrymple," said Carr, "she and I are dead to each other."

"We have seen a good deal of her, and find her much changed."

"In what way?"

"Oh, in many ways, and all so much for the better," said Eva; "she is so quiet and grave now, and except for the face and voice, I would not know her."

"Ah," said George, "but how much of this is put on? how much of it may be acting?"

"Put on, Major Carr," echoed Clara, "for what purpose?"

"To deceive you and others who might know her story."

"No! I don't believe her present demeanour to be put on. I think, poor soul, she sees her terrible fault, and having paid dearly for it, she has come out purified and chastened."

"But what could she possibly have had to say to you two?" queried George Carr; "surely if, as you say, she is penitent for her sin, it must be ever present to her, and she should therefore well know she is no fit society for such as yourselves."

"Ah, Major Carr," replied Eva, her eyes dim with tears, "can you wonder at her, poor crushed heart, seizing with avidity this opportunity of pouring out her tale of woe to us, knowing we would accord her our sympathy? Her sufferings have been truly terrible; and, dear friend," here Eva took his hand and looked at him wistfully through her tears, "be charitable, put aside your just resentment against her, if only for a season; give her an hearing; let her tell you of her remorse, her sorrow, and her deep, deep repentance."

"You move me nearly to tears myself," exclaimed George, looking with reverend admiration on the fair, upturned face,

"but it cannot be, she and I have done with one other for good; and even supposing we met, what would be the ultimate advantage of it?"

"At all events, you would be assured of her penitence and regret, Major Carr, and that she has been amply punished for her sin," said Clara.

"Granted then I consented to see her," replied George, now visibly moved and speaking in less uncompromising tones, "what then? She would probably tell me she was sorry and penitent, and so forth; I ask, what then?"

"She would ask you to forgive her, Major Carr," answered Clara, looking pleadingly into his face, her handsome eyes suffused.

"What!" he ejaculated, rising and confronting the ladies on the couch; "what! ask me to forgive her the crime she has been guilty of? forgive her for bringing dishonor to my name, and sorrow to my heart? forgive her, I say, for violating vows, for perjury to her God and to me? Could I forgive her all this?"

"Yes," cried Eva, "yes, forgive her all this, and thus prove you are a true Christian and ready to obey our Saviour's precepts. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven, does not Christ say so?"

"But will God forgive her?"

"I feel sure He has, Major Carr; your wife has made her peace with her Heavenly Master, and now only waits to do so with her earthly lord."

"But I no longer exercise lordship over her," exclaimed Carr; "I have cast her from me; there is nothing in common between us now."

"Oh, don't say so, dear friend," replied Eva. "Think of her crushed heart, her long years of repentance and remorse, and oh, if you could realize the intensity of her soul's desire to supplicate you for pardon! dear Major Carr, don't withhold the boon she craves; believe me you will be doing a good, a noble, generous act, by letting her see you once more."

As she spoke, Carr kept his eyes fixed gravely on her, and.

as her earnest pleading searched his heart, all his sterner resolutions melted, his lips quivered with the feelings so strongly stirred within him, and he said, "I can refuse you nothing when you plead so eloquently; I verily believe you to be an angel on earth. Yes, I will see her, I will accord her my forgiveness, never to set eyes on her again."

"Major Carr," now said Eva, desperately resolved to bring matters to an issue, and play her last card on behalf of poor Norah, "Major Carr, you believe in an after judgment?"

"Most assuredly."

"You believe then you will have to stand before the throne and ask for forgiveness of your sins during your life?"

"Yes."

"And you hope for pardon?"

"I do; most humbly."

"You would do much to secure your chance of this pardon?"

"I would, Miss Fosbrooke; indeed I do my utmost to make atonement for all my sins of omission and commission."

"How?"

"By doing my duty to the best of my ability towards God and man."

"What is the greatest gift, Major Carr?"

"I don't understand you."

"What did Christ say to the man who kept all the laws from his youth up, and yet lacked one thing?"

"Oh, I see what you mean; yes, Christ told him he lacked charity."

"Major Carr," rejoined Eva, solemnly, "secure this greatest of all gifts."

"How, Miss Fosbrooke?"

"Oh, secure it," she said, now throwing herself on her knees at his feet, and turning her tear-bedewed face beseechingly up to him, "oh, secure it by forgiving your poor erring repentant wife, and take her to you once more. Forgive, if not forget, her one great sin. Remember the temptation she was subject to; he, the tempter, was too strong for her, and she fell. She has been

fearfully, terribly punished ; and now, utterly crushed by the weight of remorse, she is yearning to cast herself at your feet, even as I have done, and sue for your grace. She is ready to be your slave, your servant. Spurn her not ; turn not a deaf ear to the cry of her who was once your cherished, honored wife. Believe me, God will reward you openly if you hearken to the cry of this poor sinner. He will imbue a right spirit within you, and lead you to snatch this brand from the burning. Major Carr, dear valued friend," and here she seized his hand and pressed it to her bosom, "take poor Norah back to you ; I, Evangeline, whom you once loved, ask you."

Clara, seated on the sofa, was crying outright. He was silent, though the tears coursed down his cheeks as he listened to this beauteous woman pleading so eloquently on her knees before him. Thoughts of what might have been flashed across his mind, and then came the conviction that he had himself greatly to blame for the shipwreck of his domestic happiness. Then, again, his conscience smote him with the recollections of his ill-spent earlier life ; he remembered how he had ill-treated her whose cause was being now so powerfully and eloquently pleaded. At heart he was a seriously thinking man. He knew that by taking his erring wife back to his bosom he ran the chance of experiencing obloquy and reproach from his fellows ; but he also knew that his doing so would be entered to his credit in the great Book of Life. Besides, who could withstand the supplications of the angelic girl at his feet ? Every feeling of resentment and anger, however just, against his wife vanished, and were replaced by emotions of pity and forgiveness. Eva's exhortations had the desired effect, for taking her by the hand, and raising her to her feet, he said, "Miss Fosbrooke, God ever bless you, I will do as you exhort me to. I will forgive Norah her sin ; I will condone her offence ; I will give her back her place in my heart and home. Appoint a meeting, but beyond naming the place and the hour, say nothing."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Met once more—Poor Norah—Forgiven and forgotten:

She was standing by the same bench whereon she had had her interview with Clara and Eva; a tall figure draped in black with a velvet toque, and veil coming to just above her sweet pensive mouth. She heard the sound of wheels on the road, heard them stop, and knew that in a few moments she would be face to face with her injured and outraged husband.

"Norah!"

Slowly she turned, and raising her eyes, met those of her husband. This moment, so longed, so prayed for, had arrived, and with it she was seized with an uncontrollable trepidation which deprived her of speech. Her grand bosom rose and fell, and as was usual with her when more than ordinarily excited, she trifled nervously with the bangles on her wrists.

"Norah," repeated George, coming a step nearer, and holding out his hand, "we meet once more, and at your request; what do you wish to say?"

"I dare not give utterance to my feelings," she murmured, at last finding her tongue; "I dare not speak to you or look at you," and she bowed her face in her hands.

"Norah, look up," replied George, in grave accents. "Our friends told me you were anxious to see me, and I have granted you this interview. What have you to say to me?" he added kindly, noticing her to be in tears.

"Oh, my husband, my husband!" she wailed now, throwing herself on her knees and crouching at his feet, with her hands still covering her face, and her whole form convulsed with sobs.

"Well, Norah, what would you with your husband?" he asked, contemplating the abject being before him.

"Forgiveness and pardon," she articulated between her sobs.

He said nothing, but continued to gaze dreamily at her. An indescribable feeling prompted him to thus prolong her agony of uncertainty. It was with no vindictive motive he did this, nothing akin to the savage mercy a cat shows a mouse ere she destroys it, but he wished to assure himself that this woman,

his wife, was really and truly repentant of her sin, and with this intent he delayed speaking the words that would imbue the poor crushed heart before him with new life.

"Forgiveness," he at length said; "do you know what you are asking of me?"

"A boon I have no right to expect," she murmured.

"Then why ask for it?"

"Because something within me tells me to hope for mercy at your hands."

"Do you know what you are, Norah? What those acquainted with your antecedents look on you as?"

"Too well; oh, only too well."

"And you are fully alive to the extent of the injury you have done me?"

"I am."

"And are you honestly and really sorry for your sin?"

"I am: words cannot convey the sense of my sorrow, the depth of my remorse. I am very, very sorry for having sinned against Heaven and you. I have asked pardon of God, and I feel sure He has forgiven me."

"Is not this profanation, Norah? Do you think God would hear your prayers?"

"Yes," she ejaculated, now removing her hands from off her face and looking him straight in the eyes. "Yes, I feel sure my prayers have been heard, and that God will grant me His peace." She gazed at him steadily for a few seconds; her eyes then dropped, and she heaved a deep sigh,—one of those sighs, reader, which only woman, in her direst agony, can call up, and which is so suggestive to us of woe, of the heart strings at breaking tension, of a world of bitter, bitter sorrow!

She continued kneeling at his feet, her eyes cast down, her frame every now and then convulsed with a sob, and her hands as usual toying with her bangles. Poor, poor thing! As George, lounging on the bench contemplated her, he thought of the brief happy time he had passed with her, and how far different things might have turned out, if in spite of the unpleasant behaviour of the Khalsapore people, he had played his cards

differently, and had tried to win her over to him by love and forbearance. He then called to mind the many provocations he had received at her hands; how she dared and braved him and made his life a misery to him. But, on the other hand, what was the result of her retrospective glance over his own conduct towards her? Had he not been in the habit of drinking deeply and secluding himself from her in those days at Khalsapore? Used he not to repay recrimination by recrimination, and thus goad her to disobedience and rebellion? And oh, God in Heaven! had he not once brutally struck her, raised his hand against a weak woman, and that woman his wife? Yes, he remembered all this; and now a chastened, a better man, his soul went out to the poor creature grovelling before him, and he resolved to make her happy.

"I also forgive you then, Norah," he said at length.

She looked at him once more "George, dear," she murmured, "may I take your hand?"

He gave her his hand; she took it, and raising it to her lips, she kissed it passionately, raining hot tears over it.

He was moved nearly to weeping himself, but by a powerful effort he restrained his emotion. "Having forgiven you," he said, "there is no use in prolonging an interview as painful doubtless to you as it is to me. Good-bye then, Norah," and without another word he rose and left her.

She said nothing. Blank despair seized on her soul; her fondest hopes were shattered. She remained on her knees trying to pray, trying to collect her thoughts, and look her fresh misery in the face.

Poor, poor heart!

George proceeded a few paces towards the road, and then turned and looked at her. There she was in the same abject attitude, her face once more bowed in her hands, and her strong lithe frame shaken with violent sobs; his wife, his erring, but, he felt assured, deeply penitent wife! He was all she had in this world. No parents, an orphan, with a blighted life and tarnished name, still young and very, very beautiful: how was she to fight life's battle without his protecting arm? His hand was

still wet with her tears. Would he desert her at this supreme moment? Would he consign her to a life of misery and toil? No! He hastened back to her, raised her from her kneeling position, and locking her in his arms, joined his lips to her's in a long fervid kiss. "My darling, my darling," he uttered in fond accents, "everything is forgotten, everything forgiven; here, dear love, is your abiding place on my breast; all your sorrows, all your trials, are at an end. Come to me again, my Norah, and may He who rules all for our good grant us happy life, never to part again on this earth."

Her sobs ceased, she gave him one fond look full of ineffable tenderness and joy, the next moment her head rolled heavily from his shoulder, her embrace relaxed, and a deadly pallor came over her.

In the excess of her joy, in the revulsion of her overwrought feelings, her heart temporarily failed, and she had fainted.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Back to Khalsapore—Yet another dilemma—Mutual confidences.

Yes, Eva's fondest hopes were realized. George and Norah became completely reconciled, and by tacit consent not a word was said relative to the past. Poor Norah, though, was not through her vexations yet, she had still to encounter the terrible frowns of Mrs. Grundy; but she knew nothing of this now, and she lived content in the too happy present. George had a long interview with Prince Lednekoff, who, with the Princess, rejoiced exceedingly in Norah's restored happiness. They surrendered her to her husband with the best grace possible, the Princess giving her as a parting gift a magnificent necklace of pearls. A rumour of the episode got whispered abroad, and Neilgherry society marvelled when they beheld in Mrs. Major Carr the quondam flower of the Muscovite flock. No one, however, down there got to the bottom of the business, and George and his wife were well pleased to allow the matter to remain in mystery.

Time fled, and with it the tenure of our friend's sojourn on the southern hills drew to a close; so let us once more return to Khalsapore, and listen to what is being said at the hospitable mess-table of our old acquaintances, the Irregulars.

"Gad," exclaimed Major Leveson Power, "'tis a bold thing to do, look at it which way you will: how does Carr know she'll be received by the people here?"

"All I know is that I for one will receive her with open arms," replied Dr. Fagan.

"And introduce her to your wife, Fagan?" enquired the Major.

"Decidedly; and I have no doubt you will present your wife to her, Major, when she joins you. I am certain, from what I hear, Mrs. Carr deserves every consideration."

"Well in that case we should try and smooth matters."

"It depends mainly on the ladies," remarked Doyle, now Lieut.-Colonel, and commanding the corps in Colonel Fosbrooke's absence. "I dare say if Mrs. Dalrymple and Miss Fosbrooke set the fashion, the rest will follow like a flock of sheep."

"What are your impressions, Mr. Molehampton?" asked Fagan of the Padre across the table.

"Well, I am afraid Major Carr will meet with some difficulty in certain quarters, especially among those who are new arrivals, but who, nevertheless, have heard of the unhappy past, and who, ignorant of all the softer, the more pathetic features of the case, will not be prepared to look with leniency on the bringing of the lady into their midst."

"Aye," said Stuart, the Caledonians' Major, "the matter was being discussed this morning at Mrs. Logan's *chota hazri*, and all our ladies are, I fear, dead against receiving Mrs. Carr."

"And you, Stuart?" asked Colonel Doyle.

"I, my dear fellow! I'm ready to send the band out and play them in. I don't care a rap. I think if the husband condones an offence of this kind, the world is bound to follow suit. But you see," added the good-looking Highlander, laughing, "I am in the minority, being the only bachelor in the wing."

"Then there's Mrs. Bryan, she's dead against it," remarked Thorowbad.

"But they are going, aren't they, as soon as the Dalrymple's return?" asked Doyle.

"No. Didn't you see it in the *Gazette*? Bryan is to be Extra Deputy Commissioner, a sort of colleague of Dalrymple's."

"Has she been influencing people then?" asked Fagan.

"Who, Mrs. Bryan? Yes, I believe so," replied Thorowbad.

"They're our neighbours, you know. She came over yesterday and had a long talk with my wife, and she went off in high dudgeon when she found she could make no impression on her. Quite did the Burra Mem Sahib, don't you know, tried to bully my wife into a promise to give Mrs. Carr the cold shoulder."

"And Mrs. Thorowbad held out?" queried Stuart.

"Rather!"

"Bravo," said several. "Here's to your wife, Thorowbad, God bless her," exclaimed Doyle, emptying his glass.

"Poor girl," murmured Fagan, "her's has been a stormy life, and no mistake."

"We must hope for the best," rejoined the clergyman.

In due course they all returned. Naturally enough there was no demonstration, and as the Dalrymples were travelling with George and his wife, the Mooktyarkar and other officials has been duly warned to abstain from a *tamasha* of any sort to celebrate the return of the Burra Sahib of the district. Consequently Norah came back to her old home in the quietest, most matter-of-fact way.

When husband and wife at last found themselves in the privacy of their bed-room, George took Norah's head to his bosom, and standing there, his wife locked in his arms, he said, "Norah, my own, welcome, a thousand times welcome, to your home, darling. Here you have a sure resting place. In alluding for the last time to the unhappy past, let me conjure you to treat me with the fullest confidence, 'twill beget the same feeling in me. It was the want of mutual confidence and love that made shipwreck of our happiness once. Let us run no such risk again, Norah dear. Believe me, darling girl, and I am speaking to you solemnly and sincerely, that no thoughts of the past, and what has been, will ever rankle in my heart.

I, darling, stand to you in the place of God ; I have forgotten and forgiven, so rest assured in my fondest, most undying love," and raising the sweet tear-bedewed face, he kissed her.

"George, my own noble generous husband," she answered, clinging to him and looking up lovingly at him, "if a life of devotion, worship and true love will atone for the past, truly, darling, you won't regret having been merciful and taken me back to you. It was only after my sin came home to me, and I suffered just punishment for it, that I became aware of the priceless jewel I had lost in sacrificing your love. Oh, darling, rest assured in my future faith and duty to you. I now know how I love you, and I hope by my future conduct to merit yours in return," and kissing him fondly, she wept happy tears on his breast.

Norah had given her husband her history, which has already been narrated. He was deeply affected by the recital of her suffering, and a sombre fire shone in his eyes when his wife described her second re-encounter with Trollys. It may as well be related here that they never saw him again. Months afterwards a paragraph in the *New York Herald* told of a shooting affray in a drinking den in Boston: how an Englishman had stood with his back against the wall, firing his revolver at four men, receiving their fire in return, killing three of them and succumbing to the last shot fired at his heart by the fourth villain, as he turned and fled. From the contents of his pockets the undeniably brave Briton proved to be the Honourable Frederick Trollys, an English officer on leave.

After a few days' sojourn it became very apparent to the Carrs and their immediate friends that a strong feeling existed in the station against receiving Norah in society. She, poor girl, chastened, subdued and utterly altered, bowed her head in meek submission to this fresh trial, this new cross. "Oh, George, I seem fated, darling, to bring trouble and annoyance on you, and in this instance your noble generosity to me is the cause. Why didn't you leave me to my fate, my own, and let me end my days in solitude and sorrow?"

"Cheer up, my darling," he replied, taking the noble form

to his breast, "kind friends are at work for us, and I am sanguine as to the result; we have only to be patient for a while, and all will end well."

"I pray God it will be so," murmured Norah, *tearfully*.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The greatest of all gifts.

The station church was very full that Sunday evening, and Mr. Molehampton looked down on an abnormal congregation. Besides the regular worshippers, people were there who attended service occasionally. Again, the good Padre recognised faces who hitherto were only familiar to him in mess-rooms and on tennis courts. Presbyterians from the Caledonians were present as well, and although the church-parade had been held in the morning as usual, there was a large sprinkling of soldiers, both Highlanders and Gunners, in the side aisles. The reason of there being such an unwonted congregation this particular evening, lay in the fact of the Rev. Mr. Molehampton having sent round a circular during the week just closed, particularly inviting every one, both great and small, to evening service that day.

The circular set forth that he, Mr. Molehampton, had an important theme for his sermon, a theme that concerned them all more or less, and he consequently requested their attendance. The circular had been also carried to the barracks, and thus was explained the unusual presence of the soldiers. Some of the congregation were well acquainted with Mr. Molehampton's plan, others surmised what was coming, while the great majority were in ignorance of the cause of this special convocation. It need hardly be said that the Carrs were not present.

The service over, Mr. Molehampton opened his Bible and began his sermon.

"In the eighth chapter of St. John, the third to the eleventh verse, you will find these words:—'And the Scribes, and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, he lifted up Himself, and said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last, and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.'"

The above beautiful words of the Evangelist Mr. Molehampton delivered in a deep and impressive voice, especially the closing sentence uttered by Jesus, so full of compassion and forgiveness. The congregation now all knew what was coming. Looks were exchanged, people settled themselves in more comfortable positions and those hard of hearing leaned forward with hand on ear eager to catch every word of what promised to be a soul-stirring discourse.

Mr. Molehampton was an extempore preacher of great power and talent. Closing the Bible and leaning over the pulpit, he thus addressed his hearers:—

"Brethren, this portion of the Sacred Book conveys to us its own peculiar lesson. It tells us how a woman, a weak and sinful woman, was caught in an indiscretion; yes, in the very act, by those who brought her before our Saviour. This woman they told Christ was taken in adultery. They then propounded the provision made in the Mosaic Code for the punishment of

such offenders, which laid down that sinners against conjugal fidelity were to be stoned to death, which means that the criminal would be taken out to some public place and there have stones cast at her till she died. The Jews were ever laying in wait for Jesus ; they took every opportunity to entangle Him in His talk, propounding abstruse theological questions, knotty legal points, and so forth. Here then was an opportunity of confounding Him, of accusing Him. In all probability the chiefs among the Scribes and Pharisees had been told of the woman caught in sin, and they at once determined on dragging her before our Lord, with a view to detecting some flaw in His argument or decision in the matter which they could seize upon and use to His disadvantage and confusion. When therefore the poor sinner was brought into the temple and thrust before Christ, and the Scribes and Pharisees had accused her, and quoting their law as to her punishment, had asked Him for His opinion, what did our Lord do ? He stooped down, tracing characters on the floor of the Sacred Fane, as if he appeared not to hear the babble of angry voices around Him. But they would have no denial. They persisted in asking him for his decision, repeating very likely the accusation, and enhancing the agony and shame of their wretched captive. Our Lord at length addressed them, and knowing the utter wickedness of their hearts, He struck directly at their consciences and bade him among them that was void of offence towards God and man to be the first to cast a stone at her. Having said this, He took no further notice of captors and captive, and resuming His lowly attitude, He again wrote on the ground. The effect however of His words was truly electrical. Those self-righteous men, those captors of the sinning woman, were convicted by their own consciences. The still small voice within their breasts told each individual that he was not without sin. Dared one of them to stand forth, and, looking the Redeemer in the face, say boldly, ' Lord behold I am without sin, I will be the first to cast a stone at her ? ' No ! they were all sinners, they were all corrupt : burdened with conscious guilt, and utterly confounded at the argument where-with Jesus had met their hypocritical alacrity to bring the

offender to punishment, they shrunk out of His presence, headed by the chief among them to the meanest of the crowd, till the hall was entirely deserted except by our Lord and the erring woman. On Jesus perceiving there was no one there beside Himself and the prisoner, He asked her where were her accusers, and did no one condemn her? She answered and said, 'No man, Lord.' Then came the gracious, all-forgiving sentence from those divine lips, 'Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.' Brethren, this incident in the life of our Saviour has been exemplified amongst us; but in our case we have no divine Judge to teach us our duty, but God will speak to us through our hearts, and oh, before proceeding further, I ask Him to imbue you all with a right spirit of charity, and that the words which I, an humble servant of His, speak to you this day, may not fall unheeded to the ground. One of us, I say, has erred as did the woman at Jerusalem. She sinned against God and man. Sent forth into the cold world by a justly incensed and outraged husband, repentance and remorse came on her, and she cried to God in her agony, and He heard her. Yes, her cross was heavy and her burden grievous to be borne. The blessed words of hope, taught her perhaps in her childhood, glimmered in the vista of her recollection, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' She remembered these words and flew to her Saviour. He who is ever living to make intercession for us, pleaded for her. God heard her cry and gave her peace. Yes, my friends, from being a worldly, careless, and depraved woman, she who has gone through the fiery furnace of sin and affliction, has come out of the ordeal purged of all dross and with a lively faith in her Father and His goodness. He has forgiven her. Then he whom she outraged, whose honor she cast to the winds, he too has forgiven her and taken her back to his bosom. Convinced of her repentance and the new and right spirit within her, he has said to her, 'Come, and sin no more.' If therefore, brethren, our Heavenly Father has forgiven her by granting her His peace; if her earthly lord has opened his arms to her, restored her to her wonted place in his heart and home, should we hold back

and say, 'Begone! you are a sinner, we will have none of you?' Oh no! think, brethren, and I imitate my Divine Master, and ask you who is without sin among us? Will any one here present stand forth and avow his or her entire innocence of sin? Are any of us good? Have any of us kept ourselves unspotted from the world? No! Where then are this woman's accusers? There is no one. Therefore, brethren, God tells each of us that He forgives this woman, and He bids her go and sin no more! Turn, brethren, to the seventh of St. Matthew and read what our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount said about judging our fellows: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' Oh then be guided by these precepts. 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.' If then you don't forgive your erring sister and live in charity with her, how can you expect God to forgive you your trespasses? Let me exhort you then to forgiveness, to charity. Receive her back among you, treat her with love, let no reminiscence or remembrance of the past influence you in your attitude towards her; 'For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.'"

He ceased; many there had been moved to tears. The discourse held them spell-bound, and people who had come to that church puffed up with uncharitableness and malice towards the subject of the soul-stirring sermon they had just been listening to, left the sacred edifice with the determination to do as God, through the medium of His faithful servant, wanted them to

There was none of the usual gossip and talk at the various porches while the congregation waited for their conveyances; no one spoke; all got into their carriages in silence and drove home.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Happy days—A son and heir—Norah finds peace at last.

Truly was Norah's life now a happy one. The sense of peril past was omnipresent to her, but with the future left in safer hands than those of us mortals, she was apparently without a care. Mr. Molehampton's appeal from the pulpit had had the desired effect. Every one called, and lady visitors as they rose to depart, kissed poor Norah on both cheeks. It was a sad ordeal for her, and in delicate health as she was, she found Eva's support invaluable. "Do, dearest Eva, come and stay with me till all have called," she had written to our heroine; "I feel so nervous and am not as strong as I was." So Eva sat in state with Norah, and helped her to receive the whirl of visitors, who all appeared to make it a point of calling as soon as possible after Mr. Molehampton's sermon. Our friend, George Carr, was very happy also, rendered more so by a certain announcement his wife had made him. Passionately fond of children, he yearned for his own, and when Norah told him of the confirmation of her suspicions, his cup indeed appeared to brim with joy.

Time fled, and the date for Norah's accouchement approached. Every arrangement had been made. Dr. Fagan had secured the services of a nurse from Lahore. Mrs. Dalrymple had moved over to the Carrs' house at Norah's earnest request, and the issue of the event was calmly and confidently looked forward to.

Alas! we are short-sighted mortals, we know not what a day, an hour, a minute, may bring forth. Norah, seemingly some days from her confinement, was suddenly taken ill at 11 o'clock at night. Clara, who was sleeping in her room, roused the nurse. Lights moved about the house. George drove over and fetched Fagan. Labour was very rapid, and the husband, as he walked up and down the front verandah, was appalled as he heard the shrieks of his poor wife in her agony. He prayed fervently, prayed for her who, undergoing the first pangs of maternity, was in danger of her life. At last there was a lull. Some one came out to him in the verandah. It was Clara;

George regarded her keenly under the verandah lamp, and saw she was endeavouring to look calm.

"Well, Mrs. Dalrymple?" he asked hurriedly

"It is a boy, Major Carr," she whispered.

"But Norah, what about her?"

"She is progressing, but"—

"But what?"

"There is a good deal of hæmorrhage."

"My God!" uttered George, striking his forehead; "tell me," he continued, in an agonised whisper, "is there any danger?"

"None, if the hæmorrhage can be stopped; but keep up a good heart, I dare say all will turn out well. I'll tell Dr. Fagan to come out to you as soon as he can."

He continued his agitated walk up and down the verandah. There were no screams now, but there appeared to be a good deal of hushed commotion in the house; native female servants going in and out; syces and others flying along the drive on errands, evidently ordered from some one within.

Another lull, and out came Fagan.

"Carr," said the Doctor, hastening to him, "get into your dog-cart and go for Ross of the Caledonians. He's living now with Macalister, in the house opposite the library. Mrs. Carr is not progressing as well as I could wish. Go, old fellow, and be quick."

White as a sheet and with a sore misgiving at his heart, George hastened round to the stables. The Purdaysee syce, grown grey in the service of the Feringhee, hearing that all was not going on well, and divining that the conveyance would be required, had both horse and cart in readiness. Blessing the man for his forethought, George sprang in and drove at top-speed to Dr. Ross' house. The kindly Scotsman agreed to obey his colleague's summons at once, and was soon in the sick room. All that night did the two medical men bring their skill to bear upon the case. With morning light Carr was allowed to come in and see his wife and babe. He was struck with horror on beholding Norah's pallid looks, and the serious expression on the countenances of those in the room made his heart sick within him. The infant was progressing favourably. A young woman.

from the barracks had already been procured, and the child was deriving healthy sustenance from the ample store in the person of this buxom Scotch lassie. All that day did George remain with his wife. All that day did the two doctors battle with the case, but alas! to no purpose: the hæmorrhage continued, and poor Norah became weaker and weaker. During a brief period, while the patient slept, George took the opportunity of learning the truth from the doctors. "Tell me," he said, addressing them jointly, "tell me the worst, is there no hope?"

"Carr, dear old friend," replied Fagan, gravely, "we are afraid there is no hope. We have done everything for Mrs. Carr that it is possible to do, and nothing but a miracle could save her now."

George groaned in spirit, and kneeling by her bedside, prayed in silent agony.

After an interval she awoke, and seeing her husband on his knees beside her, she put her arm round his neck and drawing his head to her bosom, whispered, "George, darling, I feel very weak, and I think I am dying. Tell me, love, what do the doctors say; don't hesitate, my own, I'm not afraid to die."

"Norah, my beloved Norah," sobbed George.

"Ah, then, there is no hope. God's will be done. George, beloved husband, I shall soon go away and stand before God; I feel sure of His mercy; but you, darling, repeat your absolution of my sin. Let me once more hear those sweet words of forgiveness from your lips before I die."

"My darling, my darling," cried the wretched man, "I have forgiven you from the bottom of my heart, and I now repeat it; darling, you have my free and full forgiveness."

"Thank you, darling," whispered Norah, huskily. "George, love," she continued after a pause, "the infant, our son"—

"Well, darling?"

"I shall soon be going, love, and I have a last favour to ask you regarding our child."

"Speak Norah, what would you, darling?"

"When I am gone, love, and you may recover from any little grief you may suffer for my loss, give our child a mother."

“What mean you, Norah?”

She had become very weak now, and the angel of death was hovering over her.

“Though I go—darling, there is—another true—heart—left, and—oh so worthy to—take my place—and be—a mother to our boy. George, love—do you—understand me?”

Her husband only bowed his face and wept.

“I refer,” she said, between her gasps, “to Eva—she—will—be a—mother—to him. Tell her—that I—poor sinning—but penitent—Norah—wish it. Will—you—tell her?”

“Yes, darling,” whispered the well-nigh distracted husband.

“George!—loved husband—good-bye. God—ever—bless—you. We—will—meet—again. Oh—Jesu—”

These were her last words, and while her hands were clasped in his, and his head nestled in her bosom, the chastened spirit of the erring but truly repentant and worthy Norah took its flight to the realms above. No one had witnessed that last scene. The doctors knew it was a hopeless case; while Clara and Eva, so well acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of this man and wife, thought it better to leave them alone together at the last. When however after a time they came in, they perceived at a glance that the poor wife was a corpse, while George still reclined his head on the bosom now rapidly growing cold.

So she went. Poor Norah, let us hope, dear, that in spite of your sin, you are now as one of the angels in heaven, waiting patiently for the time, when the spirit of him whom you loved so on earth will join you in those regions of the blessed, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The message from the dead—Eva's conditions—Over the Border once more—George and his followers—In Kandahar again.

Two years have elapsed since Norah Carr was laid in her grave in the Khalsapore cemetery. Two years unattended with any changes of importance concerning our friends. After the funeral, George had begged Eva to take his child in her care, to which she readily assented; so between our heroine and his

Scotch nurse, poor Norah's boy grew chubby and strong. The Dalrymples have gone to the Continent to drink some famous waters and enjoy life generally. The edge of George Carr's grief has been dulled by time, and we now behold him very resigned, but as pleasant and good-hearted as ever.

"I don't know how to thank you for the care you bestow on my boy," said George to Eva one morning while our heroine was romping with the child as the father came in upon them.

"For Norah dear's sake it's a labour of love," replied Eva, pausing in her romps as her young charge toddled up to his papa for a kiss and caress.

"Eva, you are goodness itself," said George, with an earnest look in his eyes. "To-day is the second anniversary of Norah's death. I have something to tell you, Eva, and I have been patiently waiting till to-day to tell it. Will you walk with me under the trees for a while?"

Summoning Jessie, the Scotch nurse, Eva put on her sun hat and accompanied George into the compound.

"Do you know," he said, seriously and gravely, "I have a message for you from the dead?"

"From the dead!" echoed Eva, wonderingly.

"Yes, from poor Norah; the last words almost that she uttered were for you."

"And you have said nothing about it all this time," exclaimed Eva, in tones of gentle reproach.

"I deserve your censure, Eva; but you will forgive me when you hear the message, and I tell you the motive that induced me to withhold it up to now."

"What is the message?"

"She asked me," said Carr, now halting and confronting his companion, "to tell you it was her dying wish that you should be a mother to her child."

"And have I not been a mother to him?" queried Eva; "at least next door to one."

"Up to now you have. But oh, Eva, be a mother in verity to him henceforth. Be my wife, darling, and thus fulfil poor Norah's wish to the letter."

She knew it was coming, and she was prepared for it. She noticed the gradual return of his affection for her. All along had she loved him, and she but waited for a re-declaration of his love to accept him.

"George," she said, throwing herself into his arms, "you know I have been faithful to you through everything. In all that has happened since the day you wrote that fatal letter, I have been actuated solely by my deep love for you, and you know it. I now understand the delicate motives that prompted you to withhold dear Norah's message till now, and I admire you for it. I will be your wife, dear George, on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That I recover the locket I gave poor Mr. Henniker."

"Incomprehensible, yet angelic, being that you are," exclaimed George "I respect you for your constancy of purpose; but reflect, dear, Henniker has been dead now three years, and the locket, in all probability, has long since been melted down. If our future happiness depends on the recovery of that locket, our chances are poor indeed."

"George, dear," replied the girl, gravely, "don't try to turn me from my purpose. I have never yet known my convictions to turn out unfounded, and I don't say this in any self-praise. I have a feeling here," and she laid her hand on her heart, "that that locket can be found if search be made for it; that it has not been destroyed, and that it will some day be restored to my hands. On the day, nay the hour if you will, that I regain possession of that locket, I will be your wife."

He saw she was firm; he saw the inutility of trying to make her swerve from her resolution. He had already had ample proof of her stability of purpose, her strength of character, and he therefore knew his only chance of winning this girl for his wife lay in his placing the locket in her hands.

His arrangements were soon made. Afghanistan was quiet now. Abdul Rahimon, in spite of the presence of Muscovites at Cabul, was our ally, our friend. George applied, and obtained three months' leave, and through the aid of Mr. Bryan, who now reigned in our old friend Dalrymple's place, the permit to visit

the Province of Candahar was procured without difficulty. Colonel Fosbrooke gave three months' leave to four astute Pathan non-commissioned officers of the Irregulars, who had bravely stuck to George on the day of the great defeat, and who now volunteered to accompany him in his expedition.

The evening before he left, George had these four men up to his bungalow and explained to them the object of his journey. They faithfully promised to aid him to the best of their ability. They entered heart and soul into the expedition, for all of them were natives of Candahar itself, and here was an opportunity of visiting old friends and talking over old associations.

One evening, just as the sun was sinking behind the citadel of Candahar, a small cavalcade of horsemen could be seen riding towards the Shikarpore gate of the city. All wore the Pathan dress, but the long stirrup, the easy graceful bearing of these five horsemen, betokened them to be other than the ordinary natives of the country. One of them, the leader of the troop, though attired, head-dress and all, in the picturesque Pathan costume, was undeniably an Englishman, as proved by his cast of countenance and the fact of his conversing with his followers in the Urdu tongue. Yes, it was indeed George Carr and his four faithful troopers, who had thus far proceeded on their journey in safety.

"You think then, Akbar Shah," said George, addressing the nearest horseman, "that we stand a chance of finding the "*gahina*" in the city?"

"Huzoor, I'm almost sure of it," replied the Pathan. "Lall Khan here, who came to this place on furlough just after peace had been signed, says that '*gahina*' of all sorts, looted from the bodies after the great battle, were being hawked about the streets."

"But Ayoub's men were mostly Heratees, and is it not likely that one of these got possession of the locket and took it away with him?"

"Huzoor," replied Lall Khan, "the Heratees, after Ayoub's army was defeated, sold all their loot to the nearest villagers and they came into the city and sold it to the Sherewallahs."

"What says Noor Baz? Has he not some relative in the

Kotwallah and would not he be the best man to conduct the enquiry?"

"Yes, sir," replied Noor Baz, a fair-haired, blue-eyed young fellow. "The Foujdar is my uncle, and I will get him to aid us."

"Five hundred rupees mind between you four on the day we recover the locket, and as many sheep as you like at the shrine of Haibut Shaheed," said the officer to his followers.

"Huzoor," replied Akbar Shah, gravely, "so long as your object is gained, we shall be happy. With our mutual God's aid, sir, (In Shallah) we will succeed."

"Nevertheless that won't prevent us making merry over it," said George, in kindly tones.

"We halted last night near a famous shrine, Huzoor," remarked Noor Baz, "Peer Kudross by name; I went there, and a spirit seemed to tell me that we should succeed."

"I hope so, my men (*Jewan Murrda*); I sincerely hope so."

"Salaam Alaikum," ejaculated several Jezzail men, composing the guard of the gate which they now arrived at. "Whence come ye?"

"Alaikum salaam," replied the travellers, simultaneously raising their hands to their heads. "We come from over the Border on business in Candahar," added Akbar Shah.

"But there's a *Gaiour* with you," remarked a man reclining on a carpet and pulling away at a hookah, "what does he want?"

"You use a term which was buried when peace was made, *Agah*," said Noor Baz, reproachfully. "The Feringhees are your friends now, and yet you style this one a *Gaiour*."

"*Bismillah*," answered he of the hookah, "your pardon, friend. 'Tis but so short a time since we were at each other's throats. *Sahib, salaam*," he added, rising and saluting George, who courteously returned the civility. "You have business in the city. Go in God's name, and may He be with you," and motioning to the Jezzailchees, who at once left the path clear, the little party entered the city.

"The *Hurramee*!" muttered Noor Baz below his breath to Sikunder in Pushtoo. "I recognise him. He was with the *Wulli*

and was one of the first to listen to that Irany Moolah whom Ayoub sent among us just before the great battle; and to call our officer a *Gaiour*! Infidel himself! there is more peace, happiness and justice under the flag of Kaiser-i-Hind than ever reigned under that of Shere Ali and all his forefathers to boot," and the handsome Pathan's face clouded over and he swore an Afghan oath.

Alighting at a serai, Noor Baz hastened away to the Kotwallee. He soon returned, escorting a venerable man riding a beautiful Belooch mare and followed by a cavalcade of horsemen, all armed to the teeth. "Huzoor," whispered the trooper, leaning forward in his saddle, "this is the Foujdar, all depends on him."

George went down the steps, and assisting the old man to alight, helped him into the serai. After the usual compliments on both sides, the Foujdar asked to be told their business. As Carr knew nothing of Pushtoo, Noor Baz was appointed spokesman. Quietly and succinctly did the young Pathan tell the whole story to the Foujdar, who listened patiently, manipulating his rosary the while. At the end of the recital there was a short silence, during which the old man appeared to ponder, while our friends awaited his reply in eager expectation. "Call Sirkhab Khan," at length said the Foujdar. An under-sized mean-looking Belooch elbowed his way through the crowd, and crossing his hands on his breast, stood himself in front of the interlocutors.

"Tell your *Maléck*," said the Foujdar, turning to Noor Baz, "that if any one in Kandahar is able to help you in your search, here stands the man. True he is a Lasari, still he has served us faithfully for long years, and I can trust him; he is as keen as the tulwar he wears at his thigh, and if you pay him well he will find you your talisman if it is to be found. Sirkhab," he added, addressing the Belooch, "be faithful to the Frank; do your utmost," and shaking Carr by the hand, the old Foujdar took his leave, followed by his *sowarie*.

"The Lord be with you," shouted the four Irregulars, salaaming respectfully.

"And with your spirits," replied the Foujdar, waving his hand in acknowledgment.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Success—Homeward again.

And now came a weary and anxious time for our friends. Each morning they rose in expectation, and each day, after much doubt, were they doomed to experience disappointment. Sirrkhab Khan was indefatigable. An hour scarcely passed without his unearthing loot of some kind, which, together with the owner, he produced at the serai. Armed with the "*istahar*" of the all-powerful Foujdar, no one dared to gainsay him. News of the object of the mission had got wind, and there was an incessant crowd at our friend's abiding place. A number of the more respectable of the throng, when made fully acquainted with George's purpose, loudly applauded it, and wished him all success; and great was the interest displayed, as Sirrkhab Khan appeared with successive batches of loot-owners. Sad mementoes of the late war and the crowning disaster were brought to light. Now would be shewn a photograph of some one dear to him, whose bones were mouldering on the battle field; then there would be a ring. Another man would throw down a bundle of coats, khakee-coloured, and the buttons bearing the number of that famous Rifle regiment that stampeded on that awful day. George and his party were moved when a man brought an entire suit of a native officer of their own corps, the shoulder shewing a ghastly gap where the razor-like sword of some fanatic Ghazi had sent to Paradise the gallant Cavalry man who fell on that day. Watches, rings, a few lockets, bundles of accoutrements, revolvers, pocket-knives, flasks, and a host of other trifles were all produced, but not the locket. Sikunder and Lall Khan, taking a few days' rations, and armed with an *istahar*, rode forth and instituted enquiries in the country round about, but they returned weary, down-hearted and crest-fallen. Noor Baz one day, and Akbar Shah the next, penetrated the purlieus and back slums of the city in quest of the missing locket. George, through the Foujdar, had posters stuck up in all parts of the city, offering a large reward in Indian rupees

for the wanted article. Men read this proclamation, stroked their beards, and wondered at the eagerness of the English officer to recover the locket; but when told of the love episode attached thereto, their sympathies were at once enlisted, and with many an "*In Shallah*" and "*Allah Curreem*," they wished the Feringhee success. One evening, after all had re-assembled, Sirkhab Khan acknowledged he could do no more. "Give me the reward or a portion of it," he said, "I have failed; so I will bless you for any gift, and will not curse you for nothing. God keep you and lengthen your days as your wisdom increases," he added, as Akbar Shah, at a sign from Carr, counted him out a hundred rupees.

Alas! it was no go. Everything possible had been done. "Depend on it that your treasure is either at Herat or has long ago been melted down," said the Foujdar. "I am sorry for you, but who can go against what is written?"

Their preparations were soon made. With heavy hearts the little cavalcade got ready for the return journey. George deemed it due in simple courtesy to go and take leave of the good old Foujdar. They rode down to his place of business. "He is not here," they said, "he has gone to attend an execution." Guided by a Jezzail man, they found the Foujdar superintending the arrangements for the execution of a murderer. Not wishing to disturb the old man, George and his party halted, making up their minds to be unwilling spectators of the tragedy about to be enacted. At last the prisoner was led forth. "Who is he?" asked Akbar Shah of a bystander.

"His name is Ghazi Shahdâd. He was a soldier, and is now to be executed for murdering his brother."

"Khuda Khyr," muttered the Irregular man, stroking his beard. "But what says he?" added Akbar Shah, noticing the criminal motioning in their direction with his hands.

"He craves speech with the Feringhee from over the Border," exclaimed the crowd, excitedly. "He thinks the Englishman will obtain his pardon," they added.

A messenger from the Foujdar now came and asked our friends to ride forward, which they at once did.

"He asks to speak to you," said the Foujdar, salaaming to George's salutation. "Let him have his say."

"Oh ye," exclaimed the prisoner, raising his manacled hands towards our party.

"Speak! what would you," shouted Noor Baz.

"Are ye the people who have been in search of the Feringhee jewel?"

"What if we are?" replied Noor Baz, with oriental caution, though his heart and those of his companions leapt within them.

"What would ye do to recover it?" queried the condemned.

"Anything consistent with possibility," said Noor Baz.

"I can give you the jewel," replied the man, "but I want a service in return."

"And that is?"

"That your leader get permission for my body to be given to my relatives after I am dead."

"Huzoor," whispered Noor Baz in George's ear, "God is good; this man has your locket. He begs that in return for surrendering it to you, you persuade the Foujdar to allow his relatives to receive his body after his execution."

Murmuring a prayer of thankfulness, George rode up to the Foujdar, and by the mouth of his faithful follower preferred his request. After some slight hesitation, the old man acquiesced, and George, in the exuberance of his gratitude, raised his hand to his lips and kissed it.

"The Malick agrees," now shouted Akbar Shah to the prisoner.

"Does he swear?" asked the wretched man.

"I swear," said the Foujdar.

"I am content," said the condemned. "Know ye Hubeeb Oollah, the Khafilah leader?" he asked, addressing Akbar Shah.

"I do," said Sirrkhab Khan, standing forward.

"Well then, take the strangers to his house, and obtain speech of my mother; you will find the locket with the paper in the leather bag around her neck; make your own terms with her; tell her I, her son Shahdâd, ask her with my dying breath to yield the jewel up to you."

"How did you get it?" asked Akbar Shah, at George's instigation.

"I took it off the Englishman's body."

"God be with him," muttered George, as he turned to leave the spot. Again taking leave of the Fonjdar, and once more escorted by Sirrkhab Khan, they halted at Hubeeb Oollah's house. After a weary palaver and talk, Shahdád's mother, an old wrinkled woman, consented to receive the strangers. She professed to be engrossed in her grief at the loss of her son, and at first stoutly denied any knowledge of the locket; but when Noor Baz produced from the folds of his cummerbund a bag of Indian rupees, and he counted them out in shining heaps before her, the old woman's cupidity overcame her other scruples, and detaching the locket from her neck, she threw it down before them.

Yes, there it was in all its integrity, the gold shell containing the sweet face of Eva Fosbrooke, on which George Carr gazed in silent rapture. Enveloping the locket was the parchment, on which was set forth in Hindée, Gooroomooke, Deva Nagari, Persian, Pushtoo and Sindhee, that the jewel within was more than a mere *gage d'amour* to the wearer, that whoever found it and would return it at the nearest British outpost, would be doing a noble and chivalrous act, and that God, who could always see in secret, would reward openly him who obeyed these instructions. As George read the Hindée aloud to his followers his own eyes filled with tears, and the honest Pathans preserved a discreet silence respecting the emotion of their officer.

"You all were with us on that day?" queried George, looking round on his followers.

"All but Sikunder, Huzoor; he retired with the bulk," replied Noor Baz, rather contemptuously.

"Allah ho Akbar," retorted Sikunder fiercely, "how often must I tell you that my horse carried me off in the rush, and I was helpless. Who charged the standard-bearer on the day of the victory and wrested it from five Ghazis single-handed, and who was given his stripes for the act?"

"True, true, Sikunder," said Akbar Shah, soothingly; "we

know you redeemed the name of our clan on that glorious day. Peace, Noor Baz."

"Yes, Huzoor," continued Akbar Shah, "we were with you. I was close beside you when Morton Sahib was shot and Noor Mahomed, Ressaldar, wounded."

"And, Kudawund," put in Noor Baz, eagerly, "I had just cut down an Heratee Jemadar when Henniker Sahib threw himself in the way of the man who held your life in his hand. *Aye, aye, Afsose,*" wailed the young soldier, "I can hear even now the crash of the sword as it fell on our poor sahib's bare head!"

"*La il, la il, Allah Mahamad Russool Allah,*" now repeated his three companions, stroking their beards.

"But I shot the man who killed him," remarked the British officer.

"Aye, Huzoor, that you did," said Lall Khan, a taciturn man; "you blew his head to pieces, and his brains bespattered me."

"My friends," said George, rising and placing his hand kindly on the shoulders of his followers successively, "we have reason to thank our common God for this happy issue of our expedition. In turn, I now thank you for your faith, for your aid, and for your companionship. You are *hulál* to the core." Here, and opening a pocket book, and taking therefrom a currency note for rupees 500, "here is the promised reward. You, Akbar Shah, take it and see that your comrades use it well."

A chorus of voices now arose, but Akbar Shah, ordering silence, said:

"Huzoor, I speak for all of us. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity, but from the outset we determined not to accept of it. What! take a money reward from one whom we love, respect, have followed, and are ready again to follow in a ride to death? No! Huzoor," and the noble young Pathan gave his officer the military salute, and tendered back the note.

"Are you determined about this?" asked George, admiring this rare trait in the native character, yet knowing full well how futile in face of this graceful refusal it would be to endeavour to make them change their purpose.

"Huzoor, we are determined," was the reply.

"Will you let me then give it to the Ressaidar-Major to add to the gymkhana and tamasha fund?"

"Ah, yes, Huzoor," exclaimed Noor Baz, his countenance lighting up. "If you do that, we shall be grateful."

"Very well then," said Carr, returning the note to his pocket book. "To the fund it shall go. But the shrine and the sheep?"

"We can make offerings to Haibut Shabeed in our own lines across the Border, Huzoor, and we will kill and eat as many fat doombas as your Honor may chose to send from the Mess kote," replied Noor Baz, smiling.

"Come then, friends and comrades, let us turn our faces towards Khalsapore."

The party mounted and rode off.

That night, at the first halting place, in a tope near a stream, George sauntered away beyond the circle of light shed by the camp fires, and, falling on his knees, prayed in fervent gratitude to the Giver of all good for having restored to him the locket, and thus opened the way to the accomplishment of his long-cherished desires.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

All's well that ends well.

It was one bright morning that a small cavalcade, consisting of five horsemen, halted for a minute at a point where two roads met in the station of Khalsapore. After a short conversation, one, an Englishman, separated himself from the rest, who,

giving him a military salute, turned their animals up one road, while the Englishman proceeded along the other.

Need you be told this Englishman is our friend, George Carr? Turning in to Colonel Fosbrooke's compound, the orderly under the trees, a man of his own corps, immediately recognised him, and gave the alarm. Colonel Fosbrooke hastened out in time to welcome George as he sprang from his horse.

"Successful or not?" were the Colonel's first words.

"Successful, Colonel," replied George, with subdued exultation.

"Thank God, thank God," murmured the elder officer, grasping Carr's hand. "Welcome back, dear George," and Colonel Fosbrooke embraced the wanderer.

"Where is your daughter, Colonel?"

"Here," replied the sweet voice, and Eva herself entering the room, was clasped in her lover's embrace.

"My, darling," he added, after the first rapture was over; "let me hang it round your neck," and he put the chain, with the locket attached, over her bowed head.

"Oh, George," she murmured, fondly clinging to him, "how illimitable must be your love for you to have dared so much for it?"

"And your promise, darling?"

"I redeem it, George dear, I am yours for ever more."

In a month from the date of George's home-coming they were married. The whole station was there, and great were the rejoicings. The five hundred rupees, duly handed over to the Rissaldar-Major, and a flock of doombahs, not only enabled the gallant troopers to have a glorious feed, but furnished means to adorn the road leading from Colonel Fosbrooke's house to the church and back to George's bungalow, with triumphal arches and floral decorations. Fatigue parties, supervised by the native officers, had worked at them during the night previous to the wedding day, and when the world awoke they found that particular part of Khalsapore in gala attire. Yes, it was a very happy day. Most of the guests knew the antecedents of the newly wedded pair; how Eva, gentle, good

and beautiful Eva, had waited long years for this moment—years fraught with woe unutterable to a loving woman's heart. They remembered how she had shone during the dark sad episode of her husband's first brief married life, and how she had been the means of reconciliation and forgiveness. Again they remembered how through Mr. Molehampton's stirring discourse she had swayed their hearts, and how under her influence they had refrained from casting stones at the poor reclaimed sinner, now lying in her cold grave in the cemetery hard by.

Looking on the handsome Cavalry officer standing there with his newly made wife, they remembered his reprobate life of yore,—how he drank, how he gambled, how he swore. They compared his present self to what they had known him, and were not at a loss to whom to attribute the change. Then the episode of the locket, that smacked so strongly of the days of chivalry and knight-errantry. To think that he, to gain his love, dared a journey, almost alone and unarmed, into the heart of a country wherein the very name of an Englishman yet rankled in the breast of every man, woman and child—a country with whom we had lately waged a bloody war, and peace with whom had only recently been signed. Truly was not he to be admired, held in reverence for this noble act? Aye, indeed, but he had been successful, and now reaped the reward.

Colonel and Mrs. Carr are at Khanghur; he is in command of the corps, Colonel Fosbrooke having retired. Eva hears from and writes to her father by every mail. The good old man, now a Major-General, is happy at Bath, living in quiet and peace with his maiden sister, and enjoying the congenial society of the numerous "old Indians" who make the *aguar solis* of the Romans their head-quarters.

Poor Norah's child has grown into a fine boy, and is with Miss Fosbrooke and attends a school hard by. Out in the happy home at Khanghur there is a little girl of two summers, and a strapping baby boy of some eight months. And Eva, dear Eva, how fares it with her? Matrimony has improved her. Her sweet face is as sweet as yore, but her form has filled out, and her figure is the admiration of every one. She is perfectly happy.

George now sits with her of a morning and listens reverently as this, his first love, tells him the sweet story of old, which they never tire reading about. God indeed bless them and keep them under the shadow of His wing.

Dr. and Mrs. Fagan are at Hassick. The Doctor has gained for himself a reputation for being a good "child's doctor," and many an anxious mother blesses the day that sent our old friend among them.

Major Doyle has exchanged into a Lancer regiment.

Mr. and Mrs. Molehampton are still at Khalsapore.

The Caledonians are at Peshawur.

Miss Cheyne married a Sub of her father's regiment.

General and Mrs. Cheyne are at home.

Clara Dalrymple and her husband are now at Ramrajpore. He is a full-blown Commissioner. Dear Clara has her heart's desire fulfilled. That visit to those Continental springs was a move in the right direction, for now our old friend has to look after no less than three little ones, the last two of whom are twins!

Reader, farewell!

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